

A Calm and Sober
ENQUIRY
Concerning
The Possibility
OF A
TRINITY in the *Godhead* :
IN

A LETTER to a Person of Worth.

Occasioned

By the lately Published Considerations on
the Explications of the Doctrine of the
Trinity : By Dr. Wallis, Dr. Sherlock,
Dr. S—th, Dr. Cudworth, &c.

Together with

Certain Letters (hitherto unpublished) former-
ly Written to the Reverend Dr. Wallis on
the same Subject.

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. Astwood for Tho. Parkhurst
at the Bible and 3 Crowns at the lower End
of Cheapside, near Mercers-Chappel, 1694.

b
T
th
P
a
tr
b
m

P
m
th
ag
ch

A
CALM DISCOURSE
OF THE
Trinity in the Godhead, &c.

SIR,

I Intend not this Discourse shall be concern'd in what this Author hath said of the *several Explications* given by the Persons named on his *Title-page*. The only thing it is design'd for, is the Discoursing with him that *single Point* which he refers to in his 29th. and 30th. pages, and which in this Controversie, is on all hands confessed to be the *Cardinal one*, viz. *Whether a Trinity in the Godhead be possible or no?*

I put not the Question about *three Persons*; both because I will not, in so short a Discourse as I intend to make this, be engaged in discussing the *un-agreed Notion of a Person*; and because the *Scripture* lays not that Necessity

upon me, (tho' I do not think the use of that *term*, in this affair, either blameable or indefensible.)

But I shall enquire whether *the Father, the Son (or Word) and the Holy Ghost* cannot possibly admit of sufficient distinction from one another to answer the *parts and purposes* severally assigned them by the Scripture, in the *Christian Oeconomy*, and yet be each of them God, consistently with this most inviolable and indubitable truth [*that there can be but one God.*]

This Author concludes it to be *impossible* in the mentioned Pages of his Discourse, and thereupon seems to judge it *Necessary* that *two of them* be excluded the Godhead, as many others (some going the *Arian*, some the *Photinian*, more lately called the *Socinian way*) have done before him. He acknowledges *pag. 30. col. 1.* there may be ["*some Secret revealed by God, because it was above Humane Capacity to discover it ; and sometimes* " *also*

the Trinity in the Godhead. 3

“also to comprehend how it can be”]
But adds [“there is a vast difference
“between my not being able to con-
“ceive *how a thing should be*, and a clear
“apprehension, and sight that it *can-*
“*not be.*”] What he says thus far is un-
exceptionable, and I heartily concur
with him in it.

But for what he subjoyns, (where-
in he might have spoken his Mind of
the Matter in Controversie with as much
Advantage to his Cause, without re-
flecting upon his Adversaries, as if they
considered these things either with *no in-*
tention, or with *no sincerity*, not allowing
them even the *never so little* of the *one* or
the *other*) that [“three distinct almighty
“and alknowing Persons, should be
“but one Almighty, or but One All-
“knowing, or but one God, a Man
“ (who considers with never so little
“intention and sincerity) clearly sees
“that it *cannot be*. In short, that it is
“not a Mystery, but (as Dr. South
“speaks) an absurdity and a contra-

“diction.”] This is that I would consider with him, if he will affix these words of his [a Man who considers, &c.) clearly sees it cannot be ; and it is an absurdity and a contradiction] to the Question as I have set it down above. In the mean time he cannot be ignorant that as he hath represented the matter, he hath *here* either not truly, (or at least not fairly) given the sense of any of them whom he pretended to oppose.

For when by those words, “But that three Divine Persons, or that three distinct almighty and allknowing Persons should be but one Almighty, but one Allknowing, or but One God,” he would slyly insinuate to his unwary and less attentive Reader that the same Men held *three Almighties*, and *but One* ; He well knows, and elsewhere confesses (tho’ he might suppose that some Readers would not be at leisure to compare one place of his Writings with another, but hastily

run

the Trinity in the Godhead. 5

run away with the apprehension, that such as were not of his mind spake nothing but *Nonsense* and *Contradictions*) that not only his later Opposers since *P. Lombard*, as he speaks, but divers much more ancient, as *Athanasius*, and the rest of the *Nicene Fathers*, &c. deny'd *three Almighty*s, tho' they affirm'd each of the Persons to be *Almighty*, understanding *Omnipotency* (as they do *Omniscieny*) to be an attribute not of the *person*, as such, but of the *essence*, as such, which they affirm to be *but One*, i. e. that they are each of them almighty, by communication in one and the same almighty essence. And if their Sentiment be so very absurd, he needed the less to fear representing it as it is.

And the other who seems to grant *three Almighty*s, doth never say there is but *one Almighty*; tho' such say too there is but *One God*, placing the *Unity of the Godhead* in somewhat else, as he hath himself taken Notice; which is re-

mote from expreſs Self-contradiſtion alſo.

But I ſhall concern my ſelf no further about the *one* or the *other* of theſe ways of explaining the *Doctrin* of the *three Perſons*. Only ſhall enquire concerning the *poſſibility* of ſuch a *Trinity* in the *Godhead* as was above expreſſed, requiting the *uncharitableneſs* of this *Author*, in imputing *careleſſneſs* or *inſincerity* to all, that *think it poſſible*, with ſo much *Charity*, as to believe he would not (againſt the plain tenour of Scripture) have rejected the *Doctrin* of the *Trinity* (as he profeſſes to do *that* of the *Incarnation*) if he had not thought it *every way impoſſible*.

And here I premiſe

1. That the preſent Undertaking is not to ſhew that the *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Ghoſt* are *three*, and *but One*, in the *ſame reſpect*, which I would adventure (in this *Authors* words) to ſay, no Man that conſiders with never ſo little *In-tention* and *Sincerity*, would offer at.

But

the Trinity in the Godhead. 7

But when they are supposed to be *but One, in respect of Deity*, they are thought to be *three in some other respect*.

2. That what I now design is only to represent this matter as *possible* to be *some way*, and in the way here proposed for ought we know, not as *definitely certain*, to be *this way or that*. The former is enough to our present purpose, *i. e.* if *any way* it can be conceived, without *absurdity or contradiction*, that *these* may be *three with sufficient distinction* to found the *distinct Attributes* which the *Scriptures* do severally give them, so as some things may be affirmed of *some one*, and not be affirmed of the *other* of them, and yet their *Unity in Godhead* be conserved, our Point is gained; and the clamour of *this* (and every other) Opposer ought to cease, for our asserting what every one that considers clearly sees cannot be.

Now, so much being forelaid, that we may proceed with clearness and satisfaction of mind [If we would understand

derstand whether it *be possible* that *these three* may be *sufficiently distinguished* for the mentioned purpose, and yet be *one* in Godhead, or in Divine Being; we are to recollect our selves, and consider what we are *wont*, and find our selves *indispensably obliged* to conceive of that *ever blessed Being*, and what is with less certainty or evidence said or thought of it. Therefore,

1. We cannot but acknowledge that whereas we do with greatest certainty and clearness conceive of it as *an intellectual Being*, *comprehensive* (with that) of *infinite and universal perfection*, so we do (*most expressly*, tho' this be *imply'd* in *universal perfection*) conclude it a Being most necessarily existent; which God hath himself been pleased to signify to us by the appropriated Name *I am*, or *I am what I am*.

Hereby is this most excellent of Beings infinitely, distinguished from all Creatures, or from the whole Creation. All created being is *meerly contingent*; i. e. (according

the Trinity in the Godhead. 9

ording to the true Notion of Contingency) *dependent upon will and pleasure.* So he hath himself taught us to distinguish ; and with such distinction to conceive of the Creation, Rev. 4. 11. *Thou hast made all things, and for [or by, Na] thy pleasure [or Will determined as] they are, or were created.* Whatsoever being is *necessarily existent*, the excellency of its Nature being such, as that it was necessary to it to exist, or impossible not to exist, is God, or is *Divine being.* [Notwithstanding what some have imagined of *necessary matter*, we might adventure to affirm this universally of all *necessary being* that it is Divine, taking it to be plainly demonstrable, and to have been demonstrated beyond all contradiction, by the learned Dr. Cudworth, and many others long before him. And doubt not to evince (tho' that is not the present business) that supposing the imagination of *necessary matter* were true, this sensible World could never possibly have been

been made of it, by any power whatsoever; the only pretence for which it is imagined. But if any have a mind to make this a Dispute, to avoid being unseasonably involved in it at this time, it will serve my present purpose to assert only, *whatsoever intellectual Being is necessarily existent is divine.*

And on the other hand, whatsoever being is *contingent*, i. e. *such* as that it depended on a *meer intervening act of will*, (*viz.* even the *sovereign and supream will*) whether it should be or not be, is *created*, or is *creature*.

II. Whatsoever *simplicity* the ever blessed God hath by any express Revelation claimed to himself, or can by evident and irrefragable Reason be demonstrated to belong to him, *as a Perfection*, we ought humbly and with all possible reverence and adoration, to ascribe to him. But *such simplicity* as he hath not claimed, as is arbitrarily ascribed to him by over-bold, and adventurous Intruders into the deep and most profound *arcana*
of

the Trinity in the Godhead. II

of the divine Nature, *such* as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real Perfection, *such* as would prove an imperfection, and a blemish, would render the divine Nature less intelligible, more impossible to be *so far* conceived as is requisite, as would discompose and disturb our Minds, confound our Conceptions, make our apprehension of his other known Perfections *less distinct* or inconsistent, render him *less adorable*, or *less an Object of Religion*, or *such* as is manifestly unreconcilable with his plain affirmations concerning himself, we ought not to impose it upon our selves, or be *so far impos'd* upon, as to ascribe to him *such simplicity*.

It would be an over-officious and too meanly servile Religiousness to be aw'd by the Sophistry of presumptuous Scholastick Wits, into a Subscription to their confident determinations concerning the Being of God, that such and such things are *necessary* or *impossible* thereto, beyond what the plain undisguised reason of things,

things, or his own express Word do evince. To imagine a Sacredness in their rash Conclusions, so as to be afraid of searching into them, or of examining whether they have any firm and solid ground or bottom. To allow the *Schools* the making of our Bible, or the forming of our Creed, who license (and even sport) themselves to Philosophize upon the Nature of God with as petulant, and irreverent a Liberty, as they would upon a Worm, or any the meanest Insect, while yet they can pronounce little with certainty *even concerning that*, hath nothing in it either of the *Christian* or the *Man*. It will *become* as well as *concern* us, to disencumber our Minds, and release them from the entanglements of their unproved dictates; whatsoever authority they may have acquired, only by having been long, and commonly, taken for granted. The more reverence we have of God, the less we are to have for such men, as have themselves expressed little.

III. Such

III. Such as have thought themselves obliged by the plain Word of God to acknowledge a *Trinity* in the *God-head*, viz. of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, but withall to *diminish* the *distinction* of the one from the other, so as even to make it next to nothing, by reason of the straits into which unexamined Maxims have cast their Minds, concerning the *Divine Simplicity*; have yet not thought that to be *absolute* or *omnimodous*. For the allowing of *three somewhats* in the divine nature (and what less could have been said?) cannot consist with *absolute Simplicity* in all respects, inasmuch as they cannot be *three* without differing, in *some respect*, from one another.

Since therefore there is a necessity apprehended of acknowledging *three* such *somewhats* in the Godhead, both because the Word of God (who best understands his own Nature) doth speak of three in it so plainly, that without notorious violence, it cannot be understood otherwise, and because
it

it affirms some things of one or other of them, which it affirms not of the rest; it will therefore be *necessary* to admit a *true distinction* between them, otherwise they cannot be *three*, and *safe* to say there is *so much*, as is requisite to found the *distinct affirmations*, which we find in Gods word, concerning *this* or *that*, apart from the *other*; otherwise we shall, in effect, deny what God affirms; and *modest* to confess that *how great* the distinction is, with precise and particular limitation, *we do not know* nor dare be curious to determine or enquire: only that as it cannot be *less*, than is sufficient to sustain distinct predicates or attributions; so it cannot be *so great*, as to intrench upon the Unity of the Godhead. Which *limits*, on the *one hand*, and *the other*, God hath himself plainly set us.

IV. Therefore since we may offend very highly by an arrogant pretence to the knowledge we have not, but shall not offend by confessing the ignorance

norance which we cannot (and therefore need not) remedy. We should abstain from confident Conclusions in the dark, and at random, especially concerning the Nature of God; and for instance from saying, we *clearly see a sufficient distinction* of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead *cannot be*, or is *impossible*. It expresses too little Reverence of God, as if his being had any, or so narrow, limits as to be presently seen thorough; an over-magnifying Opinion of our selves, as if our Eye could penetrate that vast and sacred darkness, or the glorious light (equally imperious to us) wherein God dwells; too great rudeness to the rest of Men, more than implicitly representing all Mankind besides as stark blind, who can discern nothing of what we pretend *clearly to see*.

And it is manifest this cannot be said to be impossible, upon any other Pretence, but that it consists not with the *Unity of the Godhead*, in opposition

to the multiplication thereof, or with *that simplicity*, which stands in opposition to the concurrence of all Perfections therein, with distinction greater than hath been commonly thought to belong to the *Divine Nature*. For the *former* we are at a certainty: But for the *latter* how do we know what the *Original, Natural State* of the *Divine Being* is, in this respect? or *what simplicity* belongs to it? or what it may contain or comprehend in it, *consistently with the Unity thereof*; or so, but that it may still be *but one Divine Being*? What *distinction*, and *unity* (conserved together) we can have, *otherwise, an Idea* or, without any apprehended *inconsistency, absurdity* or *contradiction*, we shall rashly pronounce to be impossible (or somewhat *imperfectly* resembled thereby) in the *Divine Being*, unless we understood it better than we do. Some *prints* and *characters* of that *most perfect Being* may be apprehended in the creatures, especially that are intelligent; *such being expressly*

presly said to have been made *in the Image of God*. And if here we find *Oneness*, with *distinction*, meeting together in the same *created intelligent being*, this may assist our Understandings in conceiving *what is possible to be* (in much higher Perfection) tho not to the concluding *what certainly is*, in the *uncreated*.

V. Waving the many *artificial* Unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make *one thing*, under *one Name*, I shall only consider what is *natural*, and give instance in what is nearest us, *our very selves*; tho the truth is, we know so little of *our own Nature*, that it is a strange assuming when we confidently determine what is impossible to be in the *divine Nature*, besides what he hath told us, or made our own Faculties plainly tell us is so; (and what he hath made any mans Faculties to tell him, he hath made all mens that can use them.)

But so much we manifestly find in

our selves, that we have *three Natures* in us very sufficiently distinguishable, and that are intimately united, the *vegetative, sensitive, and the intellectual*. So that notwithstanding their manifest distinction, no one scruples when they are united, to call the whole *the humane nature*. Or if any make a difficulty, or would raise a Dispute about the distinction of these three Natures, I for the present content my self with what is more obvious, not doubting to reach my mark by degrees, *viz.* that we are made up of a *mind*, and a *body*, *somewhat that can think*, and *somewhat that cannot*; sufficiently distinct, yet so united, that not only every one (without hesitation) calls that *thing* made up of them *one man*; but also every one that considers deeply, will be transported with wonder by what more-than-magical knot or tye, two things so little a-kin, should be so held together, that *the one* that hath the power of will and choice cannot sever it self, and return
into

into the same union with the other at pleasure. But,

VI. Since we find this is a thing *actually done*, the making up of *two things* of so different Natures into *one thing*, that puts the matter out of doubt that this was a thing *possible to be done*, 'twas what God could do, for he hath done it. And if that were possible to him, to unite two things of so very different natures into *one thing*; let any colourable reason be assigned me why it should not be as possible to him, to unite *two things* of a like nature. i. e. If it were possible to him to unite a *spirit* and a *body*, why is it less possible to him to have united *two spirits*? And then I further enquire, If it were possible to him to unite *two*, would it not be as possible to unite *three*? Let Reason here be put upon its utmost stretch, and tell me what in all this is less possible than what we see is actually done! Will any man say two or three spirits united, being of the same na-

ture, will mingle, be confounded, run into one another, and lose their distinction? I ask, supposing them to *pre-exist apart*, antecedently to their Union; are they not now *distinguished by their own individual essences*, let them be as much united as our Souls and Bodies are, why should they not as much remain distinct *by their singular essences*? There is no more hazard of their losing their distinction, *by the similitude* of their natures, than of our Soul and Body's transmuting one another by *their dissimilitude*.

I know not but the dictates of so vogued an *Author* with many in this Age, as *Spinoza*, may signifie somewhat with some into whose hands this may fall; who (with design bad enough) says, *that*, from whence one might collect the remaining *distinction* of two things of the same nature in such a *supposed union*, were the more easily conceivable of the two, *i. e.* than of two things of different natures. For in his

the Trinity in the Godhead. 21

Posthumous Ethicks, de Deo, He lays this down in Explication of his second Definition, [*Cogitatio aliâ cogitatione terminatur. At corpus non terminatur cogitatione, nec cogitatio corpore.*] Some may regard him in this, and it would do our business. For my patt, I care not to be so much beholden to him; for it would, at the long run, overdo it; and I know his meaning. But I see not but *two congenerous natures* are equally capable of being united, retaining their distinction, as *two* of a *different* kind, and that sufficiently serves the present purpose.

However, let any man tell me, why it should be impossible to God so to unite *three spirits*, as by his own power to fix their limits also, and by a *perpetual Law* inwrought into their distinct beings to keep them distinct, so that they shall remain everlastingly united, but not *identified*; and by vertue of *that union*, be *some one thing* (which must, yet, want a name) as much, and as truly, as our Soul and Body united

do constitute *one man*. Nor is it now the question, whether such an union would be convenient or inconvenient, apt or inept; but all the question is whether it be *possible* or *impossible*; which is as much as we are concerned in at this time.

But you will say, suppose it be possible, to what purpose is all this? How remote is it from the supposed Trinity in the Godhead? You will see to what purpose it is by and by. I therefore adde,

VII. That if such an Union of three things (whether of like, or of different Natures) so as that they shall be truly one thing, and yet remain distinct, tho' united, *can be effected*, (as one may with certainty pronounce, there is nothing more impossible, or unconceivable in it, than we find is actually done) then it is not *intrinsically impossible*, or *objectively*; it is not impossible *in it self*. No power can effect what is *simply*, and *in it self impossible*. There is therefore

no contradiction, no repugnancie, or inconsistency, *as to the thing*, nor consequently any shadow of absurdity in the conception hereof. Whereupon,

VIII. If such an *union with such distinction* be not impossible in it self, so that by a competent power it is sufficiently possible to be effected, or *made*; we are to consider whether it will appear more impossible, or whether I shall have a conception in my own mind any thing more incongruous if I conceive such an union (with such distinction) *unmade*, or that is *original and eternal*, in an *unmade*, or *uncreated being*. For we are first to consider *the thing in it self*, abstractly from *made or unmade*, created or uncreated being. And if it pass clear of contradiction or absurdity, *in its abstract notion*, we are so far safe, and are not liable to be charged as having the conception in our minds of an impossible, absur'd, or self-repugnant thing. So that clamour and cry of the Adversary must cease, or be it self absurd, and

and without pretence. This now *supposed Union with such distinction*, must if it be judg'd impossible, as it is in our thoughts introduc'd into *unmade being*, can no longer be judg'd impossible, as it is an *Union* of distinct things, but only as it is *unmade*, or is supposed to have place in the *unmade eternal Being*.

IX. This is that then we have further to consider, whether, supposing it possible that *three spiritual beings* might as well be made or created in a State of so *near Union* with continuing distinction, as to admit of becoming *one spiritual being*, to be called by some fit name (which might easily be found out, if the *thing* were produc'd) as that a *spiritual being*, and a *corporeal being* may be made or created in a state of so *near union* with continuing distinction, as to become *one spiritual-corporeal being*, called by the Name of *Man*; I say, whether supposing the *former* of these to be as possible to be done, or created, as the *latter*, which we see done already;

we

the Trinity in the Godhead. 25

we may not as well suppose *somewhat* like it, but *infinitely* more perfect to be original, and eternal in the uncreated Being? If the first be possible, the next actual, what pretence is there to think the last impossible?

X. I might add, as that which may be expected to be significant with such as do seriously believe the *Doctrines* both of the *Incarnation*, and the *Trinity* (tho' I know it will signify nothing with *them*, who with equal contempt reject *both*) that the *union* of the *two* *Natures*, the *humane* (made up of an *humane* Body and an *humane* Soul, which are *two* exceedingly different *Natures*) with the *divine* (which is a third and infinitely more different from both the other) in one *Person*, viz. of the *Son of God*, cannot certainly appear to any considering *Person* more conceivable or possible, than that which we now suppose (but assert not) of three distinct *Essences* united in the *One Godhead*, upon any account, but this only, that *this* is

is supposed to be an *unmade, eternal union*, the other *made and temporal*; which renders not the one *less conceivable* than the other, *as it is union*, but only as in the several terms of *this union* it is supposed eternally to have place in the *Being of God*; whereas that *other union*, in respect of one of its terms is acknowledged *de novo* to have place there.

In short, here is a *spiritual created being*, an humane Soul (setting aside for the present the consideration of the humane body, which united therewith made up the *Man, Christ*) confessed to be in hypostatical union with the *uncreated spiritual being of God*, not as that being is in the Person of the *Father*, nor as in the Person of the *Holy Ghost*, for then *they* should have become *Man too*; but as it was in the Person of the *Son* only; why shall it be thought less possible that *three uncreated spiritual beings* may be in so near an union with each other as to be *one God*, as that a
created

the Trinity in the Godhead. 27

created Spirit (and Body too) should be in so near union with *one of the Persons* in the Godhead only, as therewith to be *one Person*? will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible how *one* of the Persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be *incarnate*, and not the *other two*? Will not the Notion of *Person* it *self* be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its *own individual Nature*? And why is a *natural, eternal union* of *uncreated Natures* (with continuing distinction, or without confusion) sufficient unto the *Unity of the Godhead*, less supposable, than a *temporal contracted union* with created Natures (without confusion too) that shall be sufficient to the *Unity of a Person*? will it be any thing more contrary to *such simplicity* of the Divine Nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be *Tritheism*, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable *Unity* of the Godhead?

XI. That we may proceed to speak to both, let these things be consider'd with seriousness and sobriety of mind, *as to our selves*; with all possible reverence towards the *blessed God*, and with just candour and equanimity towards other *Men*. And first we must leave it to any ones future representation (not being hitherto able to discern any thing) what there is in all this that is here supposed any way repugnant to *such simplicity*, as God any where claims to his *own being*, or that plain reason will constrain us to ascribe to him, or that is really in it *self any Perfection*. We are sure God hath not by his Word taught us to ascribe to him *universal absolute simplicity*; or suggested to us any such *Notices* as directly and evidently infer it to belong to him. Nor hath seem'd at all intent upon cautioning of us lest we should not ascribe it. The *word* we find not among his *Attributes* mentioned in the *Holy Scriptures*. The *thing*, so far as it signifies any general perfection

fection, we are sure belongs to him; but the *Scriptures* are not Written with visible design to obviate any danger of our misconceiving *his Nature*, by not apprehending it to be in every respect most absolutely simple. It doth teach us to conceive of him as most powerful, most wise, most gracious; and doth not teach us to conceive all these in the abstract, viz. Power, Wisdom and Goodness to be the same thing. Yet we easily apprehend by reflecting upon our selves, that, without multiplying the subject, these may all reside together in the same man. But our difficulty is greater to conceive what is commonly taught, that these, without real distinction, or with formal only (as contradistinguished to the difference of thing from thing) are in the abstract affirmable of God, that he is Power, Wisdom, Goodness. That to his Being belongs so absolute simplicity, that we must not look upon these as things really distinguishable, there, from one another, but as different conceptions

ceptions of the same thing. We must conceive of things as we can, not as we cannot; and are only concern'd to take heed of unreveal'd, and undemonstrable, and peremptory conceptions concerning that glorious most incomprehensible and ever-blessed Being; to beware of too curious prying into the *Nature of God* (when it vvas so Penal to look unduly into, or even to touch that only-hallow'd Symbol of his Presence, his Ark!) beyond what he hath reveal'd expressly, or we can most clearly, by generally received light, apprehend. When we know there is a Knowledge of him so reserved from us, vvhereof our Minds are so little receptive, that it seem'd all one, vvwhether he told us, he did dwell in *thick darkness*, or in *inaccessible light*. 'Twill be a reproach to us, if we shall need to be taught reverence of him by *Pagans*; or that such a document should need to be given us for our Admonition, as that very ancient Inscription in
one

the Trinity in the Godhead. 31

one of their Temples imported, I am whatsoever was, is, or shall be, and who is he that shall draw aside my Vail?

XII. If we should suppose three spiritual necessary beings, the one whereof were meer Power (or furious might) destitute of either wisdom, or goodness; another meer wisdom (or craft rather) destitute of either goodness or power; a third meer goodness (or fond and fruitless kindness) destitute of either power or wisdom, existing separately and apart from each other. This triple conception would overthrow it self, and must certainly allow little ease to any considering mind. Nor could any of these be God. But if we conceive essential power, wisdom, and goodness concurring in one spiritual necessarily existent Being, in which are each of these, not only, by the *μετὰ ἑαυτὸν*, usually acknowledged in the three Persons, totally permeating one another (which signifying but meer presence, as we may express it, is in comparison, a small thing) but really and vi-

C

tally

tally united, by so much a *nearer*, and *more perfect union* than hath ever come under our notice among created beings, of partly corporeal, partly incorporeal natures, by how much beings of *purest Sprituality* may be apter to the most intimate union, than when one is quite of a different nature from the other, and as whatsoever union is supposable to be, *originally, eternally, and by natural necessity*, in the most *perfect being*, may be thought inexpressibly *more perfect* than any other. And if, hereupon, we further conceive the most *entire, perpetual, everlasting intercourse and communion* of these *three*, so originally united, that what is conceivable of perfection, or excellency in *any one of these*, is as much the *others*, for whatsoever exercises or operations, *as his own*; I cannot apprehend what there is of *repugnancy, contradiction, or absurdity* in this supposition; nor any thing that, by any measures he hath given us to govern our conceptions of him, appears unbecoming, or

unworthy of God. There is, 'tis true, *less Simplicity*, but *more perfection* ascribed hereby to the *divine Being*, intirely considered; and more intelligibly, than if you go about to impose upon your self the notion of *most absolute omnimodous simplicity* therein. There would be yet more absolute simplicity ascribed unto an *eternal Being*, if you should conceive in it *meer power* exclusive of *wisdom*, and *goodness* — and so of the rest; but infinitely *less perfection*. And, if that would avail any thing, I could easily produce more *School-men*, than one, of no small note, concurring in this sentiment that [*simplicitas, si sumatur in totâ suâ amplitudine, non dicit perfectionem simplicitèr.*] But I count it not worth the while.

XIII. And let it be here again observed, I speak not of this, as any certain determination, that thus things are in the Deity; but as a *possible supposition* of what, for ought we know, may be. If any say this gives us the Notion of a

compounded Deity, or of a composition in it ; I only say the term, *composition*, seems to imply a pre-existing *component* that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple *things* to have pre-existed apart or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into an *united state*. Whereupon I peremptorily deny any Composition in the Being of God. And let any man from what hath been hitherto said or supposed, infer it, if he can. Imagine this of the *Godhead*, and you shall, we acknowledge, conceive most untruly, most unworthily, most injuriously of God ; and what is most absolutely impossible to agree to the *Divine Being*. And for this Reason only, that I know of, that carries any shadow of Importance in it, many have been so apt, without the least warrant from any revelation God hath given of himself, to ascribe to him an unintelligible *simplicity* ; apprehending they must otherwise admit a *composition* in his most sacred

crea

cred Essence, *i. e.* the putting of things together that were separate, to make it up; which must suppose it a *new production*, that once was not, and from an *imperfect state* by the Coalition of things once severed, to have arrived to the *perfection* we ascribe to the *Divine Being*; which sort of being cannot, without the most absurd and blasphemous contradiction, ever admit to be called *God*. But if we suppose most *perfect, essential, Power, Wisdom, Love*, by *original, eternal, and most natural necessity* to have co-existed in *that being* most *intimately united, tho' distinct*; that seemingly important reason, will appear *but a shadow*, and accordingly vanish as such.

And indeed this is no more than what, *in effect*, such as discourse upon this Subject do commonly say (tho' perhaps some may less consider the *ducture and sequel* of their own professed Sentiments) when they speak of the *incomprehensibleness of God's Essence*, and how

impossible it is a *finite mind* should form or receive a full and compleat *Idea* of it; or when they therefore say, that any *conceptions* we can have of the *Wisdom*, *Goodness*, or any other *Attribute* of the *Divine Being*, are still but *inadequate conceptions*; whereby they must mean, when we consider for instance the *Wisdom* of God that we not only fall infinitely short of conceiving all that belongs to the *Divine Being*, in that kind, but that there is also infinitely more belonging thereto, in other kinds, than it is possible that *conception* can contain or express. And when we have the *conception* in our minds of the *Divine Wisdom*, do we not apprehend there is really somewhat else in the *Divine Being*, whereof that term hath no signification? or will we say his *Wisdom* and his *Power* are really the same thing? (as they must either be the same, or diverse things :) If we say they are the same, we must, I doubt, confess our selves to say what we do not understand, especially

ywhen

the Trinity in the Godhead. 37

when, in the abstract, we affirm them of one another, and of God ; and accordingly say that *Wisdom* is *Power*, and *Power* is *Wisdom*, and the one of these is *God*, and the other, *God*. I know a *formal distinction* is commonly admitted, i. e. that the *conception* of the one is not included in the *conception* of the other. But are these different conceptions *true* or *false* ? If *false*, why are they admitted ? if *true*, there must be somewhat in the *Nature* of the thing corresponding to them. But if we say they are *distinct*, but most intimately, and eternally united in the *Divine Being*, by a *necessary*, *natural Union*, or that it is not impossible so to be, what we say will, I think, agree with it *self*, and not disagree with any other *conception* we are obliged to have concerning the blessed God.

In the mean time, I profess not to judge, we are under the *precise Notions* of *Power*, *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, to conceive of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* ; nor that the *Notions* we have of those,

or *any other* divine Perfections, do exactly correspond to *vwhat, in God*, is signify'd by these Names; but I reckon, that *vwhat* relief and ease is given our minds by their being disentangled from any apprehended necessity of thinking these to be the *very same things*, may facilitate to us our apprehending the *Father, Son, and Spirit* to be sufficiently distinct, for our affirming, or understanding the affirmation, of some things, concerning *some one*, without including the *other* of them.

XIV. But some perhaps will say, while we thus amplify the distinction of these glorious *three*, we shall seem to have too friendly a look towards, or shall say in effect, what Dr. Sherlock is so highly blam'd for saying, and make *three Gods*. I answer, that if with sincere minds we enquire after truth, for its own sake, we shall little regard the friendship or enmity, honour or dishonour of this or that man. If this were indeed so, doth what was
true

true become false, because such a man hath said it? But it is remote from being so. There is no more, *here* positively asserted than generally so much distinction between the *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*, as is in it self necessary to the founding the distinct attributions, which in the Scriptures are severally given them [that when the *word* or wisdom was said to be *with God* (understanding it, as the case requires *with God the Father*) in the creation of all things, we may not think nothing more is said than that he was *with himself*; that when the *Word* is said to be made *flesh*, 'tis equally said the *Father* was *made flesh*, or the *Holy Ghost*; that when the *Holy Ghost* is said to have *proceeded from*, or have been sent by the *Father*, or the *Son*, he is said to have *proceeded from himself*, or have sent himself.] But, in the mean time this is offered without determining precisely, how great distinction is necessary to this purpose. It is not here positively said these

these three are three distinct substances, three infinite minds or spirits. We again and again insist, and inculcate, how becoming, and necessary it is to abstain from over-bold enquiries, or positive determinations concerning the *limits*, or the *extent* of this distinction, beyond what the Scriptures have, in general, made necessary to the mentioned purpose; that we may not throw ourselves into guilt, nor cast our minds into unnecessary straits, by affirming this or that to be *necessary*, or *impossible* in these matters.

XV. The case is only thus, that since we are plainly led by the express revelation God hath made of himself to us in his Word, to admit a *trinal conception* of him, or to conceive this *threefold distinction* in his Being, of *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*; since we have so much to greatnessen that distinction, divers things being said of *each* of these, that must not be understood of *either* of the *other*; since we have nothing to limit it on
the

the Trinity in the Godhead. 41

the other hand, but the *Unity of the Godhead*, which we are sure can be but One, both from the plain Word of God, and the nature of the thing it self; since we are assured both these may consist, viz. this *Trinity*, and this *Unity*, by being told there are *three* ——— and these *three* 1 Joh. 5. (i. e. plainly, continuing *three*) are *1*, *one thing*; which *one thing*, can mean nothing else but *Godhead*; as is also said concerning *two* of them, elsewhere, (there being no occasion, then, to mention the third) *I and my Father* Joh. 10. *are one thing*. We are hereupon unavoidably put upon it to cast in our own minds (and are concerned to do it with the most religious reverence and profoundest humility) what sort of thing this most sacred Godhead may be, unto which this Oneness is ascribed, with *threefold distinction*. And manifestly finding there are in the Creation *made Unions*, with sufficient remaining *distinction*, particularly in our selves, that

that vve are a *soul* and a *body* (things of so very different natures) that often the *Soul* is called the *Man*, (not excluding the *Body*) and the *body*, or *our flesh* called the *Man* (not excluding the *Soul*) we are plainly led to apprehend that it is rather more easily possible there might be *two Spirits* (so much more agreeing in nature) so united, as to be *one thing*, and yet continuing distinct; and if *two*, there might as well be *three*, if the Creator pleased.* And hence are led further to apprehend, that if such a *made Union*, with *continuing distinction* be possible in *created being*, it is for ought we know, not impossible in the *uncreated*; that there *may be* such an *eternal unmade union*, with *continuing distinction*. And all this being only represented as *possible* to be thus, without concluding that *thus it certainly is*; sufficiently serves our purpose, that no pretence might remain of excluding the *eternal Word*; and the *eternal Spirit*, the *Godhead*, as if a *Trinity* therein were

the Trinity in the Godhead. 43

were *contradictious* and *impossible*, *repugnant* to *reason*, and *common sense*. Where now is the *coincidency*?

XVI. Nor is there, hereupon, so great a remaining difficulty to *salve* the *Unity of the Godhead*; when the *supposition* is taken in, of the *natural, eternal, necessary Union* of these three that hath been mentioned.

And it shall be considered, that the *Godhead* is not supposed more necessarily to exist, than *these three* are to co-exist in the nearest and most intimate union with each other therein. That *Spiritual Being* which exists necessarily, and is every way absolutely perfect, whether it consist of *three in one*, or of *only one*, is God. We could never have known, 'tis true, that there are such *three* coexisting in *this one God*, if he himself had not told us. *What* 1 Cor. 2. 11.
Man knoweth the things of a Man,
but the Spirit of a Man that is in him? even
so the things of God none knoweth but the
Spirit of God. In telling us this he hath
told

told us no impossible, no unconceivable thing. It is absurd, and very irreligious presumption to say this *cannot be*. If a Worm were so far capable of *thought*, as to determine *this or that* concerning *our Nature*; and that such a thing were impossible to belong to it, which we find to be in it, we should trample upon it! More admirable Divine Patience spares us! He hath only let us know that this is *the State of his Essence* (whereof we should have been otherwise ignorant.) This is its *constitution*, (*q.d. ita se habet comparatam*) thus it is *in*, and *of it self*, that there are *three* in it to be conceived, under the distinct Notions of *Father, Son and Spirit*, without telling us expressly how far they are distinct, in terms of *Art*, or in *Scholastick Forms of Speech*. But he considered us as *Men, reasonable Creatures*; and that when he tells us there are *three* existing in his being, of each of which some things are said, that must not be understood spoken of the other

other, and yet that there is but *one* God. We are not uncapable of understanding, that *these three* must agree in Godhead; and yet that they must be *sufficiently distinct*, unto this purpose, that we may *distinctly* conceive of, apply our selves to, and expect from, the one and the other of them. And the frame of our Religion is therefore ordered for us accordingly, i. e. *for us* to whom he hath revealed so much. *Others*, to whom such Notices are not given, he expects should deport themselves towards him, according to the light which they have, not which they have not.

XVII. But an *Hypothesis* in this Affair, which leaves out the *very Nexus*, that *natural, eternal union*, or leaves it out of its proper place, and insists upon *mutual consciousness*, which, at the most, is but a consequence thereof, wants the principal thing requisite to the *salving the unity of the Godhead*. If *two or three created Spirits* had never so perfect a mutual Perspection of one another,

another, *that* would not constitute them *one thing*, tho' it *probably* argue them to be so; and but *probably*; for God might, no doubt, give them a mutual insight into one another, without making them *one*; but if he should create them in as near an union, as our Soul and Body are in vvith one another (and it is very apprehensible they might be created in a much nearer, and more permanent one, both being of the same Nature, and neither Subject to decay) they vvould as truly, admit to be called *one something* (as such a Creature might vvell enough be called, till a fitter name were found out) notwithstanding their supposed continuing distinction, as fitly, as our Soul and Body united, are, notwithstanding their continuing distinction, called *one Man*. And I do sincerely profess *such an union*, vvith perpetual distinction, seems to me every vvhit as conceivable, being supposed *unmade*, uncreated, and eternal, as any union is among Creatures, that must therefore be a *made thing*, or a temporal production.

And

And vvhwhereas necessity of existence (most unquestionably of an intellectual Being) is a most *certain*, and *fundamental* attribute of Deity: The *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* being supposed necessarily existent, in this *united* state, they cannot but be *God*, and the *Godhead* by reason of this *necessary* union cannot but be *One*; yet so, as that when you predicate *Godhead*, or the name of *God* of any one of them, you herein express a *true*, but an *inadequate* conception of *God*; i. e. the *Father* is *God*, not excluding the *Son*, and *H. Ghost*; the *Son* is *God*, not excluding the *Father* and the *H. Ghost*; the *H. Ghost* is *God*, not excluding the *Father* and the *Son*. As our *body* is the *man*, not excluding the *soul*; our *soul* is the *man*, not excluding the *body*. Therefore their *Union in Godhead* being so strict and close, notwithstanding their *distinction*, to say that any one of them is *God*, in exclusion of the other two, would not be a *true predication*. 'Tis indeed said the *Father* is the only true

D

God;

Joh. 17. 3.

God ; but that neither excludes the Son, nor the *H. Ghost* from being the true God also ; each of them communicating in that Godhead which only is true. It had been quite another thing, if it had been said, *Thou Father only, art the true God.*

XVIII. The order moreover, is this way also very clearly preserved and fitly comply'd with of *priority* and *posteriority* (not of *time*, as every one sees, but *nature*) which the names *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* do more than intimate. For the *Father* (usually called by Divines the *Fons Trinitatis*) being by this appellation plainly signify'd to be *First* in this *sacred Triad* ; the *Son*, as that title imports, to be *of the Father* ; and the *Spirit* to be *of, or from*, both the other. Let these two latter be considered as being *of, or from the First*, not by any intervening *act of will*, by which it might have been possible they should not have been so ; but by *natural, necessary, eternal promanation* ; so as that ne-
cessity

cessity of existence is hereby made as truly to agree to them as to the *First*, which is acknowledged the most fundamental attribute of *Deity*. This *promanation* is hereby sufficiently distinguished from creation; and *these two* set infinitely above all Creatures, or the whole Universe of created beings. Nor is there hereby any place left for that unapt application of a Son and Grandson deriving themselves from the Grandfather, or two Brothers from one Father.

P. 17. of
these Con-
siderations.

And altho' it be also true, and readily acknowledged, that there are numerous Instances of *involuntary productions* among the Creatures, and which are therefore to be deemed a sort of *natural and necessary productions*; yet that *necessity* not being *absolute*, but *ex hypothesi* only, i. e. upon supposition of their *productive Causes*, and all things requisite to those productions, being so, and so, aptly posited in order thereto, all which depended upon one *Sovereign will*

at first, so that all might have been otherwise, this signifies nothing to exempt them out of the state and rank of Creatures, or invalidate this most unalterable distinction between *created* being, and *uncreated*.

XIX. But if here it shall be urged to me that *one individual necessarily existent spiritual Being alone is God*, and is all that is signified by the Name of God; and therefore that *three distinct, individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Beings* must unavoidably be *three distinct Gods*:

I would say, if by *one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being*, you mean *one such Being, comprehending Father, Son, and Holy Ghost taken together*, I grant it. But if by *one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Being*, you mean either the *Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, taken separately*, I deny it; for both the other are truly signify'd by the Name of God too, as well as that One.

I therefore say, the term *individual*, must in this case now supposed (as

pos-

the Trinity in the Godhead. 51

possible, not as certain) admit of a twofold application; either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by it self are (according to this supposition) individual essences, but conceived together, they are the entire individual essence of God. For there is but one such essence, and no more, and it can never be multiplied, nor divided into more of the same name and nature. As the body, and soul of a man, are one individual body, and one individual soul, but both together are but one individual man: And the case would be the same, if a man did consist of two, or three spirits so (or more nearly) united together, as his soul and body are. Especially if you should suppose (which is the supposition of no impossible or unconceivable thing) that these three spirits which together (as we now do suppose) do constitute a man, were created with an aptitude to this

united coexistence, but with an impossibility of existing separately, except to the Divine Power which created them conjunct, and might separate them so as to make them exist apart; which yet cannot be the Case in respect of three such uncreated spiritual Beings, whose Union is supposed to be by natural, eternal necessity, as their Essences are; and are therefore most absolutely inseparable.

XX. Or if it should be said, *I make the Notion of God to comprehend Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a Godhead besides common to these three.*

I answer; nothing I have said or supposed implies any such thing; or that the Notion of God imports any thing more of real being, than is contained in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, and most intimately, naturally, and vitally, by eternal necessity, united with one another. As in a created being, consisting of more things than one taken together and united; a Man for instance, there is nothing more of

real

the Trinity in the Godhead. 53

real entity, besides what is contained in his Body and his Soul united and taken together. 'Tis true that this term, a Man, speaks somewhat very divers from an humane body taken alone, or an humane soul taken alone, or from both, separately taken; but nothing divers from both united, and taken together.

And for what this may be unjustly collected to imply of composition, repugnant to Divine Perfection, it is before obviated. Sect. 13.

If therefore it be askt, *What do we conceive under the Notion of God, but a necessary, spiritual Being?* I answer that this is a true Notion of God, and may be passable enough, among Pagans, for a full one. But we Christians are taught to conceive under the Notion of God, a necessary spiritual Being, in which Father, Son, and Spirit, do so necessarily coexist, as to constitute that Being; and that when we conceive any one of them to be God, that is but an inadequate, not an entire and full conception of the Godhead.

Nor will any place remain for that *trivial Cavil*, that if each of these have Godhead in him, he therefore hath a *Trinity* in him ; but that he is one of the three who together are the *One God*, by necessary, natural, eternal Union.

Which Union is also quite of another kind than that of three Men (as for instance, of Peter, James and John) partaking in the same kind of Nature ; who notwithstanding, exist separately, and apart from each other. These three are supposed to coexist in natural, necessary, eternal, and most intimate Union, so as to be one Divine Being.

Nor is it any prejudice against our thus stating the Notion of the Godhead, that we know of no such Union in all the Creation, that may assist our Conception of this Union. What incongruity is there in supposing, in this respect, as well as in many others, somewhat most peculiarly appropriate to the Being of God ? If there be no such actual Union in the Creation, 'tis enough to our purpose,

the Trinity in the Godhead. 55

purpose, if such a one were possible to have been. And we do know of the actual union of two things of very different Natures so as to be one thing, and have no reason to think the Union of two or more things of the same sort of Nature, with sufficient remaining distinction, less possible or less intelligible.

XXI. Upon the whole, let such an union be conceived in the Being of God, with such distinction, and one would think (tho' the Complexions of Mens minds do strangely and unaccountably differ) the absolute perfection of the Deity, and especially the perfect felicity thereof, should be much the more apprehensible with us. When we consider that most delicious society which would hence ensue, among the so entirely consentient Father, Son, and Spirit, with whom there is so perfect rectitude, everlasting harmony, mutual complacency, unto highest delectation; according to our way of conceiving things, who are taught by our own Nature (which also hath in it the Divine

vine Image) to reckon no Enjoyment pleasant, without the consociation of *some other* with us therein; we for our parts cannot but hereby have in our minds a more *gustfull Idea* of a *blessed state*, than we, can conceive in *meer eternal solitude*.

God speaks to us, as Men, and will not blame us for conceiving things so infinitely above us, according to the Capacity of our Natures; provided we do not assume to our selves to be a measure for our Conceptions of him; further than as he is himself pleased to warrant, and direct us herein. Some likeness we may (taught by himself) apprehend between him and us, but with infinite (not inequality only, but) unlikeness. And for this Case of delectation in Society, we must suppose an immense difference between him an all-sufficient, self-sufficient Being, comprehending in himself the infinite fulness of whatsoever is most excellent and delectable, and our selves, who have in us but a very minute porti-

the Trinity in the Godhead. 57

on of being, goodness, or felicity, and whom he hath made to stand much in need of one another, and most of all of him.

But when, looking into our selves, we find there is in us a disposition, often upon no necessity, but sometimes, from some sort of benignity of temper, unto Conversation with others; we have no reason, when other things concur, and do fairly induce, and lead our thoughts this way, to apprehend any incongruity in supposing he may have some distinct object of the same sort of propension in his own most perfect Being too, and therewith such a propension it self also.

XXII. As to what concerns our selves, the observation is not altogether unapposit, what Cicero treating of Friendship, discourses of "perpetual solitude, that
"the affectation of it must signifie the
"worst of ill Humour, and the most savage Nature in the World. And sup-
"posing one of so sour and morose an
"Humour, as to shun and hate the
"Conversation of Men, he would not
"endure

“endure it, to be without some one
 “or other to whom he might disgorge
 “the virulency of that his malignant
 “Humour. Or that supposing such a
 “thing could happen, that God should
 “take a Man quite out of the Society
 “of Men, and place him in absolute
 “solitude, supplied with the abundance
 “of whatsoever Nature could cover
 “besides ; who, saith he, is so made
 “of Iron, as to endure that kind of
 “Life ? And he introduces *Architas Ta-*
 “*rentinus* reported to speak to this pur-
 “pose.

“That if one could ascend into Hea-
 “ven, behold the frame of the World,
 “and the beauty of every Star, his ad-
 “miration would be unpleasant to him
 “*alone*, which would be most delicious, if
 “he had some one to whom to express
 “his sense of the whole.

We are not, I say, strictly to mea-
 sure *God* by *our selves* in this ; further
 than as he himself prompts and leads
 us.

the Trinity in the Godhead. 59

But if we so form our Conception of *Divine Bliss*, as not to exclude from it somewhat, whereof *that Delight in Society*, which we find in *our selves* may be an *imperfect faint resemblance*, it seems not altogether disagreeable to what the *Scriptures* also teach us to conceive concerning him, when it brings in the *eternal Wisdom*, saying, as *one distinct* from the *prime Author*, and *Parent* of all things, *then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight.*

Prov. 8.

XXIII. However, let the whole of what hath been hitherto proposed be taken together, and to me, it appears our conception of the *sacred Trinunity* will be so remote from *any shadow of inconsistency or repugnancy*, that no necessity can remain upon us of torturing Wit, and racking Invention to the uttermost, to do a laboured and artificial violence (by I know not what skrews and engines) to so numerous plain Texts of Scripture, only to *undeify our glorious Redeemer*, and do the utmost despite
to

to the Spirit of grace! We may be content to let the word of God (or what we pretend to own for a divine revelation) stand as it is, and undistorted, speak its own sense. And when we find the

Gen. 1. Former of all things speaking as WE or US. When we find

Prov. 8. another [I] possessed by the Lord, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; so as that he says of himself (as distinct from the other) I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was ——— And when he prepared the Heavens I was there, &c. When we

find the Child born for us, the Son given to us, called also the mighty God, and (as in reference to us he fitly might) the Everlasting Father. When

Mic. 5. we are told of the Ruler that was to come out of Bethlehem-Ephrata, that his goings forth were from everlasting. That the Word was in the be-

Joh. 1. ginning with God, and was God — That all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made, that was made.

the Trinity in the Godhead. 61

made. That this Word was made flesh —
 That His glory was beheld as the glory of
 the only begotten Son of the Father, full of
 grace and truth. Even that same he that
 above was said to have been in the be-
 ginning with God, and to be God. That
 when he who was said to have
 come down from Heaven, was, Joh. 3.
 even while he was on Earth, at that
 time, said to be in Heaven. That we
 are told by himself, he and his
 Father are one thing. That he Joh. 10.
 is not only said to know the
 heart, but to know all things. Joh. 21.
 That even he who according to
 the flesh came of the Israelites, is Rom. 9.
 yet expressly said to be over all, God
 blessed for ever. That when he
 was in the form of God — he Phil. 2.
 humbled himself to the taking on him the
 form of a servant, and to be found in
 fashion as a man. That 'tis said,
 all things were created by him, Col. 1.
 that are in heaven, and on earth, visible
 and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities,
 ties,

ties, powers, — and that all things were created by him, and for him; than which nothing could have been said more peculiar or appropriate to Deity. That

1 Joh. 5.

even of the Son of God it is said, *he is the true God and eternal Life.*

Rev. 1.

That we are so plainly told he is, *Alpha and Omega, the first*

Chap. 2.

and the last, he that was, and is, and is to come, The Lord Almighty,

Chap. 3.

the beginning of the creation of

God. The searcher of hearts. That the Spirit of God is said to search

1 Cor. 2.

all things, even the deep things of

Acts 5.

God. That lying to him is said to be lying to God. That the

great Christian Solemnity, Baptism is directed to be in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That it is so di-

stinctly said, there are three that

1 Joh. 5.

bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and that these

three are one thing.

I cannot imagine what should oblige us so studiously to withdraw all this

this to quite other meanings.

XXIV. And for the leaving out of this last mentioned text in some copies, what hath been said (not to mention divers others) by the famously learned Dr. Hammond upon that place, is so reasonable, so moderate, so charitable to the opposite party, and so apt to satisfy impartial and unprejudic'd minds, that one would scarce think, after the reading of it, any real doubt can remain concerning the authentickness of that 7th. verse in 1 Joh. 5.

Wherefore now taking all these texts together; with many more that might have been mentioned, I must indeed profess to wonder, that with men of so good sense, as our Socinian Adversaries are accounted, this consideration should not have more place and weight, viz. That it being so obvious to any Reader of the Scriptures to apprehend from so numerous Texts, that Deity must belong to the Son of God, and that there wants not sufficient inducement to conceive so of the Holy Ghost also; there should be

no more caution given in the *Scriptures* themselves to prevent mistake (if there were any) in apprehending the matter accordingly. And to obviate the unspeakable consequent danger of erring in a case of so vast importance. How unagreeable it is to *all our notions of God*; and to his usual procedure in cases of less consequence! How little doth it consist with his being *so wise* and *so compassionate* a Lover of the *souls of men*, to let them be so fatally expos'd unto so inevitable, and so destructive a delusion! That the *whole Christian Church* should thorough so many Centuries of years, be even trained into so horrid and continued Idolatry by himself who so severely forbids it! I cannot allow my self to think men of that perswasion insincere in their professing to believe the *divine authority* of the *Holy Scriptures*, when the *Leader* and *Head* of their *Party*, writ a book, that is not without nerves in defence of it. But I confess I cannot devise, with what design they can think those *Scriptures*

the Trinity in the Godhead. 65

were written! Or why they should count it a thing worthy of infinite wisdom to vouchsafe such a revelation to men, allowing them to treat and use it as *they* do! And that till some great Socinian wits should arise 1500 years after, to rectify their notions in these things, men should generally be in so great hazzard of being deceived into damnation, by those very Scriptures, which were professedly writ to make them wise to Salvation!

XXV. Nor is it of so weighty importance in this controverſie, to caſt the balance the other way, that a noted Critick (upon what introduction needs not be determined) chang'd his judgment, or that his *Poſthumous* interpretations of ſome texts (if they were his interpretations) carry an appearance of his having changed it; becauſe he thought ſuch texts might poſſibly admit to be interpreted otherwiſe, than they uſually were, by ſuch as alledged them for the Trinity, or the (diſputed) Deity of the

Son or Spirit, or that *the cause* must be lost, upon his deserting it, or that he was *still* to be reckoned of the *opposite party* (as this Author calls it) and that *such texts* as we most rely'd upon, were *therefore* given up by *some of our own*.

And it is really a great assuming, when a man shall adventure to pronounce so peremptorily, against the common judgment of the *Christian Church*, without any colour of proof, that our *copies*, are *false copies*, our *translations*, our *explications* false, and the generality of the wisest, the most inquisitive, most pious, and most judicious *assertors* of the *Christian cause*, for so many continued ages, fools, or cheats for owning and avowing them; for no other imaginable reason, but only *because they make against him!* How will he prove any *Copies* we rely upon to be false? Is it because he is pleased to suspect them? And is an *interpretation* false, because the words can *possibly* be tortur'd unto some other

other sense? Let him name me *the Text*, wherein any *Doctrine* is supposed to be delivered that is of meerly *supernatural* revelation, of which it is not *possible* to devise some other meaning, not more remote, alien, or unimaginable, than theirs, of most of the *disputed Texts*.

Nor indeed do we need to except that natural sentiment it self, that there is but one God, (which this *Author* takes such Pains to prove, as if he thought, or would make other men think, we deny'd it.) For tho' it is so generally acknowledged, doth he not know it is not so generally understood in the same sense? Against whom doth he write? Doth he not know they understand this *Oneness* in one sense, he, in another? They in such a sense as admits a *Trinity*, he in a sense that excludes it?

But (for such things as did need a *superadded verbal revelation*) how easie is it to an inventive, perversicacious Wit, to wrest words this way or that.

XXVI. The *Scriptures* were writ for the *instruction* of sober learners; not for the *pastime* of contentious wits, that affect only to play tricks upon them. At *their* rate of interpreting, among whom he ranks himself, 'tis impossible any *Doctrine* can with certainty, be founded upon them. Take the *first Chapter* of *St. John's Gospel* for instance, and what *Doctrine* can be asserted in plainer words, than the *Deity* of *Christ*, in the *three first Verses* of that *Chapter*? Set any man of an ordinary, unprepossest understanding, to read them, and when he finds that by the *Word* is meant *Jesus Christ* (which themselves admit) see if he will not judge it plainly taught, that *Jesus Christ* is *God*, in the most eminent, known sense. Especially when he shall take notice of so many *other Texts*, that, according to their most obvious appearance, carry the *same sense*. But it is *first*, thorough meer shortness of discourse, taken for granted, and rashly concluded on, that it is *absolute-*

the Trinity in the Godhead. 69

ly impossible, if the Father be God, the Son can be God too (or the Holy Ghost) upon a presumption, that we can know every thing that belongs to the Divine Nature; and what is possible to be in it, and what not; and next, there is hereupon not only a license imagined, but an obligation, and necessity, to shake Heaven and Earth, or tear that divine Word that is more stable, into a thousand pieces, or expound it to nothing, to make it comply with that forelaid presumptuous determination. Whereas if we could but bend our Minds so far to comply with the plain ducture of that revelation God hath made unto us of himself; as to apprehend that, in the most only Godhead there may be distinctions, which we particularly understand not, sufficient to found the Doctrine of a Trinity therein, and very consistent with the unity of it; we should save the divine Word, and our own Minds, from unjust torture, both at once. And our task, herein, will be the easier, that we

are neither concerned nor allowed to determine, that things are precisely so, or so; but only to suppose it possible that *so they may be*, for ought that we know. Which will I am certain not be so hard, nor so bold an undertaking, as his, who shall take upon him to prove, that *any thing here supposed is impossible*.

Indeed if any one would run the discourse into the abyss of Infinity, he may soon create such difficulties to himself, as it ought not to be thought strange, if they be greater than any humane understanding can expedite. But *not greater* than any man will be intangled in, that shall set himself to consider *Infinity* upon other accounts; which yet he will find it impos'd upon him unavoidably to admit whether he will or no. *Not greater* than this Author will be equally concern'd in, upon his doing that right to Truth, in opposition to the former leaders of his own Party, as to acknowledge the Omnipresence

the Trinity in the Godhead. 71

sence of the Divine essence, p. 32. which he will find, let him try it when he will. Nor yet so great, nor accompanied with so gross, so palpable and horrid absurdities, as he will soon be encountred with, should he retract his grant, or entertain the monstrously maimed, and most deformed, impious, conceit of a finite, or limited Deity!

XXVII. Yet also in this present case, the impossibility to our narrow Minds of comprehending Infinity, is most rationally improveable to our very just advantage. It ought to be upbraided to none as a pretext, or a cover to sloth, or dulness. 'Tis no reproach to us that we are creatures, and have not infinite capacities. And it ought to quiet our minds, that they may so certainly know they have limits; within which, we are to content our selves with such notions, about indemonstrable, and unrevealed things, as they can, with greatest ease to themselves, find room for.

I can reflect upon nothing in what is here proposed, but what is intelligible without much toil, or much Metaphysics. As matters, of so common concernment, ought, to our uttermost, to be represented in such a way that they may be so. We need not be concern'd in Scholastick Disquisitions about Union; or by what peculiar Name to call that which is here supposed. It's enough for us to know there may be a real, natural, vital, and very intimate union, of things that shall, notwithstanding it, continue distinct, and that shall, by it, be truly one. Nor do we need to be anxiously curious in stating the Notions of Person, and Personality, of *suppositum* and *suppositality*, tho' I think not the term *Person* disallowable in the present Case. Nor will say what that noted Man (so noted that I need not Name him, and who was as much acquainted with Metaphysics as most in his Age) published to the World above twenty Years ago, that he counted the Notion of the

Schools

the Trinity in the Godhead. 73

Schools about *Suppositum* a Foolery. For I do well know, the thing it self, which our Christian Metaphysicians intended, to be of no small importance in our Religion, and specially to the Doctrine of Redemption, and of our Redeemer.

XXVIII. But I reckon they that go the more Metaphysical way, and content themselves with the modal distinction of three Persons in the Godhead, say nothing herein that can be proved absurd or contradictions. As to what is commonly urged, that if there be three Persons in the Deity, each Person must have its distinct individual Essence, as well as its distinct personality. I would deny the consequence, and say, that tho' this be true in created Persons (taking Person in the strict Metaphysical sense) it is not necessary to be so in uncreated. That the reason is not the same betwveen finite things and infinite; and would put them to prove, if they can, that the same infinite Essence cannot be whole and undivided in three several Persons;

sons ; knowing there can be nothing more difficult urged in the Case, than may against the *Divine Omnipresence* ; which irrefragable reasons, as well as the plainest testimony of Scripture will oblige us to acknowledge.

But I think, tho' *this Hypothesis* abstractly considered, and by it self, is not indefensible ; it doth not altogether so well square with the *Christian Oeconomy*, nor so easily allow that distinction to the *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, which seems requisite to found the distinct attributions that are severally given them in the *Holy Scriptures*.

XXIX. To conclude, I only wish these things might be considered, and discoursed with less confidence, and peremptory determination ; with a greater awe of what is *divine and sacred* ; and that we may more confine our selves to the plain words of Scripture in this matter, and be content therewith. I generally blame it in the *Socinians* (who appear otherwise rational and considering men)
that

that they seem to have formed their belief of things, not possible to be known *but by the Scriptures, without them*; and then think they are by all imaginable *Arts*, and they care not what violence, (as Socinus himself hath in effect confessed) to mold and form them according to their *preconceived sense*. Common Modesty, and Civility, one would have thought, should have made Schlietgius abstain from prefixing, and continuing that as a running Title to a long Chapter: *Articulus Evangelicorum de Trinitate cum sensu communi pugnat*, engrossing common sense to himself and his Party, and reproaching the generality of Christians, as not understanding common sense. They should take upon them less, and not vaunt, as if they were the Men, and Wisdom must dye with them.

For this Author, I Congratulate his nearer approach to us, from those who were formerly Leaders of his Party, in the Doctrines of Gods Omnipresence, and the perceptiveness, and activity of separate Souls.

Souls. He writes with sprightlineſs and vigour. And, *I doubt not*, believes really, what he writes with ſo little ſeeming doubt. And becauſe his Spirit appears to be of a more generous, exalted pitch, than to comport with any thing againſt his Judgment, for ſecular intereſt and advantage. I reckon it the greater pity it ſhould want the addition of what would be very ornamental to it, and which he wiſhes to two of the Perſons, to whom he makes himſelf an *Antagoniſt*, more of the tendreſs and Catholick Charity of genuine Chriſtianity, p. 19. col. 2. to accompany thoſe his abilities and learning, which would not thereby be the leſſer (as he ſpeaks) nor the leſs conſpicuous.

I believe few would have thought him to ſee the leſs clearly, if he had been content to ſee for himſelf, not for mankind. And if he had not talkt at that rate, as if he carried the Eyes of all the World in his Pocket, they would have been leſs apt to think he carried his own there.

Nor

Nor had his Performance, in this Writing of his, lost any thing of real value, if in a Discourse upon so grave a subject, some *lepidities* had been left out, as that of *Dulcinea del Toboso*, &c.

And to allude to what he says of Dr. Cudworth, his displeasure will not hurt so rough an Author as *Arnobius*, so many Ages after he is dead, if he should happen to offend him, by having once said, *Dissoluti — est pectoris in rebus serijs querere voluptatem* — &c.

But for all of us, I hope we may say without offence to any, common humane frailty should be more considered, and that we know but in part, and in how small a part! We should, here-upon, be more *equal* to one another. And when it is obvious to every one, how we are straitned in this matter, and that we ought to suppose one another intently, aiming to reconcile the *Scripture-discovery*, with *natural Sentiments*, should not uncharitably censure, or labour to expose one another, that any seem

seem more satisfi'd with their *own Method* than with *ours*. What an odd and almost ludicrous Spectacle do we give to the blessed Angels that supervise us (if their benignity did not more prompt them to compassion) when they behold us fighting in the dark, about things we so little understand; or, when we all labour under a gradual blindness, objecting it to one another, and one accusing another that he abandons not his own too weak sight, to see only by his (perhaps) blinder Eye.

Thus, Sir, you have my sense what I think *safe*, and *enough* to be said in this weighty matter.

To you, these thoughts are not *new*, with whom they have been communicated and discoursed heretofore, long ago. And I believe you may so far recollect your self, as to remember the *principal ground* was suggested to you, upon which this Discourse now rests; [*viz. necessity of Existence, and Contin-*
gencie;

gencie; emanations absolutely independent upon any will at all; and the arbitrary productions of the Divine Will,] as the sufficient and most fundamental difference between what is uncreated and what is created; and upon this very account, as that which might give scope and room to our thoughts, to conceive the Doctrine of the Trinity, consistently with the Unity of the Godhead; and so, as that the Son, tho' truly from the Father, and the Holy Ghost tho' truly from both, shall yet appear infinitely distinguished from all created Beings whatsoever.

So much you know was under consideration with us above twenty years ago; and was afterwards imparted to many more; long before there was any mention or forethought, within our notice, of such a revival of former controversies, upon this Subject, as we have lately seen.

This occasion, now given, hath put me upon revolving anew these former thoughts; and upon digesting them into some order,

der, *such as it is*, for publick view. If they shall prove to be *of any use*, it appears they will not be *out of season*; and it will be *gratefull to me* to be any way serviceable to *so worthy a Cause*. If they shall be found *altogether useles*; being evicted either of *impertinency*, or *untruth*, it shall not be *ungratefull*. For I thank God, I find not a disposition in my mind to be fond of any Notions of mine, *as they are such*, nor to be more adventurous, or confident, in determining of things hid, not only in so profound, but in most sacred darkness, than I have all along exprest my self. I ought indeed to be the more cautious of offending in this kind, *that being the thing I blame*, the positive asserting *this or that* to be *impossible*, or *not possibly competent* to the nature of God, which by his own Word, or the manifest reason of things doth not plainly appear to be so. Much more which his Word doth as plainly as it is possible any thing can be exprest *by words*,
ascribe

the Trinity in the Godhead. 81

ascribe to him. The only thing I assert is, that a *Trinity in the Godhead* may be possible, for ought we know, in the way that I have proposed. At least it is so, for any thing that I do as yet know. And so confident I am of the truth, and true meaning of his Word, revealing a Trinity in his eternal Godhead, that I strongly hope, if ever it shall be proved to be impossible upon these terms that I have here set down; by the same, or by equal, Light, the possibility of it some other way, will appear too. i. e. That not only a *Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead* is a possible thing; but that it is also possible that the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost* may be sufficiently distinguished to answer the frame and design of Christianity: And that will equally serve my purpose. For so however, will the Scandal be removed, that may seem to ly upon our Holy Religion, through the industrious misrepresentation which is made of it, by Scepticks, Deists or Atheists, as if it were

F 2

made

made up of inconsistencies and absurdities, and were fitter to be entertained with *laughter* than *faith*: And being effectually vindicated, it will be the more *successfully propagated*, and more *cheerfully practised*; which is all that is coveted and sought by

S I R,

Your very Respectfull,

Humble Servant, &c.

P O S T.

Postscript,

HAVING the Copies of some Letters by me, which I wrote to Dr. Wallis between two and three Years ago, upon this Subject; I think, Sir, it is not improper, and perhaps it may be some way usefull, to let them accompany *this to your self*.

And here I shall freely tell you my principal inducement, (taking notice in some of the Doctor's *printed Letters*; of others to him, contained in them) to send him (*incognito*) one also; but with that reason against printing it, which you find towards the end of the first Letter.

It was really the apprehension, which had long remained with me, that the *simplicity*, which (if the Notion of it were stretch'd too far) not the Scriptures,

but the Schools have taught us to ascribe to the *Being of God*, was *that alone* which hath given us difficulty, in conceiving a *Trinity in the onely One God*.

It is not the *Unity*, or *Oneness* of the *Godhead*; but the *Simplicity* of it, as the *School-men* have stated it, that hath created the matter of dispute. *Unity*, you know, denies *more of the same*; *simplicity* denies *more in it*. Concerning the former that there could be no more Gods than *One*, we are at a point; the reason of the thing it self, and the *Holy Scriptures* so expressely asserting it, leave it out of dispute.

All the doubt is about the latter. Not whether such a thing belong to the *Nature of God*; but concerning the just explication of it: As it is a real excellency, not a blemish; and not meerly a *moral*, but a *natural excellency*, there can be no doubt of its belonging to the *Divine Nature*; but if you understand it as exclusive of all *Variety therein*, you find not any expresse mention of such

the Trinity in the Godhead. 85

an Attribute of God in the Scriptures. They are silent in the matter. It hath no *authority*, but of the Schools. That and the Reason that can be brought for it must give it its whole and only support. It is the only thing that must open, and give way, to admit the *Doctrine of the Trinity*; and it is the only thing that needs to do so. For we none of us assert a *Trinity of Gods*; but a *Trinity in the Godhead*. It is the only thing that can to the Adversaries of the Trinity with any colourable pretence seem opposite to it. And which therefore I thought the only thing that remained to be sifted and examined, if they will state it in an opposition thereto. What so mighty and invincible strength of *reason* it had, whence alone either to shock the *Authority*; or pervert the plain meaning of the Holy Scriptures, discompose the whole frame of *Christian Religion*, disturb the Peace of the Church, perplex very thinking minds, subvert the Faith of some, and turn it into ridicule with too many.

I reckon'd *the Dr.* (as I still do, notwithstanding the Contempt this *Author* hath of him) a Person of a very clear, unmuddied Understanding. I found him, by what he express'd in *his first Letter of the Trinity*, not apt to be awed by the Authority of the *Schools*, nor any *Bigot* to them, as having declined *their Notion* of a Person, and fixing upon another, (less answering, as I apprehended, the *Scheme* and *Design* of *Christianity*) I thought it easie, and reputable enough to him to add, what might be requisite in this matter, without contradicting (directly, or discernibly) any thing he had said. I gave him the opportunity of doing it, *as from himself*, without seeming to have the least thing to that purpose suggested to him by any other. I had my self, I think, seen and considered the main strength of the *School-mens reasonings* concerning that *simplicity*, which they will have to be divine; and, for ought I do yet know, have competently occur'd

curr'd to it in this *foregoing* Letter, and partly in what you will now find I wrote to him. But what there is of *real infirmity*, or impertinencie to *this case* (as it is, and ought to be represented) in their arguings, I reckon'd he would both *see* and *evince* more clearly than I.

Therefore I greatly desired to have engaged him upon *this Point* ; but I could not prevail. And am therefore willing that what I writ then with design of the greatest privacy, should now become publick. Not that I think it hath so great value *in it self* ; but that perhaps it may further serve to excite some others *more able* and more at leisure to search and enquire into this matter ; and either to *improve*, or *disprove* what I have essayed. And *which of the two* it is, 'tis all one to me. . For I have no Interest or Design, but that of *Truth*, and the service of the *Christian Cause*.

I was so little apprehensive of any such future use to be made of these Letters,

Letters, that I kept no account of the dates, except that one of the two latter (which both only refer to the first) I find by the Copy I have in my hands, to have been sent *Decemb. 19th. 1691.* I remember it was a long time, and guess it might be 6 or 8 weeks, e're I heard any thing of the *first*, after I had sent it. Probably it might have been sent in *October*, or the beginning of *November* before. I at length heard of it very casually, being in an house in *London*, whither the *Doctor's Eighth Letter* was nevvly arrived (then no secret) in order to *impression*. I then found this my first Letter was lightly toucht, but mistaken; vvhich occasioned (it being a *Post-night*) my *second*. That was followed by the *third*, the next *Post* after, when I had a little more time wherein to express my mind, tho' I still concealed my Name, as it is yet fittest to do, my main Business in my Letter to you lying with a Person, who (blamelessly enough) conceals his.

These

These two latter of my Letters to the Dr. produced some alteration in that Paragraph of his 8th. Letter, which relates to my first.

But yet no way answering the Design for which I writ it. You have them now together exactly according to the Copies I have by me, excepting one or two circumstantial things fitly enough left out, or somewhat altered.

And they had all slept long enough, if this occasion had not brought them to light.

But before I give them you, let me suggest some things further to you concerning the foregoing Letter to your self.

You may apprehend that some will think it strange (if not an inconsistency) that I should suppose it possible an absolute unimodous simplicity may not belong to the Divine Being, when yet I absolutely deny all composition in it.

And I apprehend too some may think

think so, at least a while ; but such as *have* considered well, will not think so, and such as shall, I presume will not long. For,

1. If I had *deny'd* the *simplicity* of the Divine Nature, had the inference been just, that therefore I must grant a composition ? How many instances might be given of *one opposite* not agreeing to *this* or *that thing*, when also the *other* doth as little agree ! And most of all doth the transcendent excellency of the *Divine Nature* exempt it from the limiting *by-partitions* to which Creatures are subject.

Take *Reason* in the proper sense for arriving gradually by argumentation from the knowledge of more evident, to the knowledge of obscurer things, and so we cannot say *the Divine Nature is rational*. But is it therefore to be called *irrational* ? *Faith* and *Hope* agree not to it. Are we therefore to think *Infidelity* or *Despair* do not disagree ?

It is indeed more generally apprehended, we can scarce have the notion of any thing that strictly, or otherwise than by some very defective analogy, agrees to him, and to us. Some *Pagans*, and some *Christians* from them (not in derogation, but) in great reverence to the high excellency of the Deity, not excepting the most common notion of all other, even that of *being it self*; but making his *Being* and *Substance* to be *supereffential*, and *super substantial*. 'Tis out of doubt that whatsoever *perfection* is in us, is not the *same thing* in him *formally*, but in an unconceivable transcendent *eminency* only. Do therefore their Contraries agree to him ?

2. I am far from denying the *simplicity of the blessed Nature of God*, which I ascribe to him in the highest Perfection which it is capable of signifying. I most peremptorily affirm not only all the Simplicity, which he expressly affirms of himself; but all that can by just consequence be inferr'd from
any

any affirmation of his; or that can by plain reason be evinced any other way. Whatsoever is any real Perfection, &c.
Sect. 11.

'Tis true while I affirm such a *simplicity* as excludes all *composition*, in the sense already given, I affirm not such as excludes all *variety*. Not such as excludes a *Trinity*, which he so plainly affirms, and with such distinction, as his affirmations concerning it imply, and make requisite.

I further judge that tho the *Scriptures* do not expressly ascribe simplicity to the *being of God*, as a *natural excellency*, they say that which implies it, as *such*, to belong to him; as when they bring him in saying of himself *I am what I am*. This must imply his nature to exclude every thing that is *alien from it self*. I take it, as it signifies (besides a *moral*) a *meer natural excellency*, to import a most perfect *purity of essence*. And I understand that to be *purum*, which is *plenum sui*, and *quod nihil habet alieni*. I

do therefore take the *natural simplicity* of the divine Being to exclude the ingrediency of any thing that can infer in it, *conflict, decay, change, disturbance* or *infelicity* in the least degree; and to include whatsoever infers the contraries of all these; *serenity, tranquillity, harmony, stability, delight, and joy*, in highest Perfection; as *necessity of existence* also doth; and that for all this, it by no means needs to exclude a Trinity, but to include it rather.

But I judge humane (and even all created) Minds very incompetent Judges of the *divine simplicity*. We know not what the *divine nature* may include consistently with its own perfection, nor what it must, as *necessary thereto*. Our eye is no judge of *corporeal simplicity*. In *darkness* it discerns nothing but *simpli-*city, without distinction of things. In *more dusky light* the whole Horizon appears most simple, and every where like it self. In *brighter light*, we perceive great varieties, and much greater if

if a Microscope assist our Eye. But of all the *aerial people* that replenish the Region (except rare appearances to very few) we see none. Here want not Objects, but a finer Eye.

'Tis much at this rate *with our Minds* in beholding the *spiritual Sphere* of *Beings*, most of all *the uncreated*, which is remotest, and *furthest above*, out of our sight.

We behold Simplicity! and what do we make of that? vast undistinguished Vacuity! sad, immense Solitude! only this at first view. If we draw nearer, and fix our Eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate, as the half-cur'd Blind man did, when he thought he saw *Men like Trees*.

But if a voice which we acknowledge Divine speak to us out of the *profound abyss*, and tell us of gratefull varieties and distinctions in it; Good God! shall we not believe it? Or shall we say we *clearly see that is not*, which *only we do not see*? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness!

Now follow the Letters.

LETTERS

TO

Dr. WALLIS,

Sent in 1691.

LETTER I.

S I R,

I Could much please my self in revolving in my own mind the very respectful Thoughts and Veneration I have long had for you, and in Con-
versing with the grateful and enter-
taining *Idéa* which I have not abitrari-
ly, but by your irresistible imposition
received ; and retained of you many
G Years

Years, on the account of your former most useful and acceptable Performances, and which is both renewed and heightened greatly by your late, clear, prudent, and piously modest Discourses (both Letters and Sermons) of that awful Mystery [the Trinity in the Godhead.] But as I can neither *satisfie my self* of the fitness of making an *Encomium* of you the matter of a Letter to *your self*; so nor can I hope to *please you* by doing a thing *in it self so inept*, and so *insignificant to you*. I shall better do *both*, if I shall offer any thing to you concerning this mentioned Subject, *your* further consideration whereof may prove a further benefit to the World.

In what you have already said concerning it, you have used that great Caution, and so well guarded your self, as not so far as I can apprehend, to *give an adversary in this single point, the least advantage*. That which I would in the general, humbly offer, is, whether

ther you have said so much as *with safety might be said*, and as the Case may require, for the gaining of a just advantage to the common Christian Cause.

We design, in fight, not only to keep our selves safe, but to overcome, and not in *prælio* only, but in *bello*. In Wars, indeed of this sort, both our own safety and victory, are less to be valued than truth. Which, being of a piece, can be injured in no part, without some damage to the whole frame of congenious Truth. And as it is very possible, while an Enemy is withstood attacking *some one Fort*, a greater loss may not be provided against *elsewhere*; it may so fall out in Affairs of this kind too, that the Care of defending *some one Truth* may be accompany'd with a present not attending to the jeopardy of *divers others*.

The nearer we approach an Adversary (within just limits) in these rational decertations, the less he can have to say against us. But being well re-

solved our selves about the main point of disagreement, we then take Care not to come so near, as to fall in with him, pass into his Tents, and give away our main Cause.

I am (*worthiest Sir*) far from assuming so much to my self, or detracting so much from you, as to give a judgment that this *really* is done in your Discourses about the Trinity. I only submit it to your own most penetrating judgment, what may be further *requisite* and *possible* in this matter, to take away any appearances hereof, and prevent ill consequences that may too easily ensue.

I have, for my own part, long impos'd it upon my self to abstain from any *positive Conceptions* concerning the Godhead, beyond what I find expressly contain'd in the *divine revelation*, or what the *reason of things*, either antecedently thereto, or consequentially thereupon, doth most evidently perswade and require; and do greatly approve the
same

the Trinity in the Godhead. 99

same caution, which I cannot but observe with you. But desire it may be weigh'd whether *such measures* may not, and must not lead us further.

As for the word *person*, you prudently profess not to be fond of it, the thing being agreed, thô you also truly judge it a good word, and sufficiently warranted.

For the *Notion* signify'd by it, you all along seem to decline that of the *Schools*, or the *Metaphysical one*, which, you know, makes it to be a *rational* (or intelligent) *suppositum*; and to take up with (what I think I may, wanting a fitter, *i.e.* a more comprehensive word, call) the *Civil Notion* of it; which will allow the same man to be capable of sustaining three or more *persons*, supposing his circumstances or qualifications to be *such* or *such*, as to that purpose you speak both in your *Letters* and *Sermons*.

Now whereas you have also told us, *Letter 1.* that by *personality* you mean

that distinction (whatever it be) by which the *three persons* are distinguished each from other; that which, with great submission, and most profound respect to you, I propose to your further Consideration, will be capable of being resolved into these two Enquiries.

1. Whether only such a distinction of the Divine Persons, as this amounts to, will be *sufficient to found the several attributions* which the *Holy Scriptures* give distinctly and severally to them, and to preserve the Scheme of Christian Religion entire, which is wont to be deduced from these Sacred Writings.

2. Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as *possible*, consistently with the *salved unity* of the Godhead.

As to the former, 1. Whereas you think the word Person to be a good word, and *sufficiently warranted by Scripture*, Heb. 1. 3. *where the Son is called the express Image of his Father's Person*; al-

ledging

the Trinity in the Godhead. 101

ledging that so we render the word *Hypostasis* which is there used, and do mean by it what you think to be there meant; I desire you would please to consider whether the word *Hypostasis*, according to the common use of it will admit to be so taken, as you explain your self to mean by the word *Person*. For tho' the *Latine* word *persona*, as you say, according to the true and ancient sense, may well enough admit to be so taken, as that the *same Man* might sustain three persons, I offer it to your re-consideration, whether ever you have observ'd the word *Hypostasis*, in any sort of Authors, when it signifies any Person at all (for I know that it frequently signifies somewhat else than a Person) to be taken in that sense. And whether *one Hypostasis* so taken as it uses to be when it signifies a Person, may not be capable of sustaining three of those Persons which you here describe. And whether, according to this sense you mean not God to be only one such *Hypostasis*.

2. Be pleas'd further hereupon to consider how well it agrees with this supposition of God's Being but *one Hypostasis*, or intelligent *suppositum*, so frequently to speak, as the Holy Scriptures do of the *Father*, *Son* or *Word*, the *Spirit* or *Holy Ghost*, as three distinct I's or He's. *The Lord possessed me* (as the Divine Word or Wisdom is brought in speaking) *in the beginning of his way.* — *I was set up from everlasting*, Prov. 8. 22, 23. *When he prepared the Heavens I was there*, vers. 27. — *Then was I by him*, vers. 30, &c. *The Word — was with God*, Joh. 1. 1. *He was in the World*, vers. 10. *We beheld his glory*, vers. 14. And of the Spirit, *He dwelleth with you*, Joh. 14. 17. *The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things*, vers. 26. And *whom I will send you from the Father, he shall testify of me*, Chap. 15. 26. *And when he is come, he will reprove the World* — Ch. 16. 8. And the observation seems to me as weighty, as it is usual, that,

in

in some of the mentioned Chapters, the somewhat hard *Synthesis* of construing ἐκεῖνος with πνεῦμα (even where πρῶτος is not the nearer *Suppositum*, but, in one place, a very remote one, (and one would think too remote to be referr'd to *ch. vers. 13, 14.*) is rather chosen to be used than that the Spirit should not be spoken of as a distinct *he*, or rather than he should be called *it*, (which could not so fitly notifie a Person.) If the same man were a King, a General, and a Father, I doubt whether that would give sufficient ground to his being called *He*, and *He*, and *He*.

2. But the distinct Predicates spoken of the three Sacred Persons in the Godhead seem much more to challenge a greater distinction of the Persons than your Notion of a *Person* doth seem to admit. That of *sending*, and being *sent*, spoken so often of, the *first* in reference to the *second*, and of the *first* and *second* in reference to the *third*, as not

to need the quoting of places. If the same man were a *King*, a *General*, and a *Judge*, methinks it would not well square with the usual forms of speaking among Men (and God speaks to Men as Men) to say, that, as the *first*, he sends the *two latter*, that is *himself*.

And one would think our being required to be Baptized in the distinct Names of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* should signifie some greater distinction.

As also that *three* are said to bear witness in Heaven. I doubt that in a Cause wherein our Law requires two or more Witnesses, the same Man that should be a *Father*, a *Brother*, and a *Son*, would scarce thereupon be admitted for *three Witnesses*.

And how the *Incarnation* of the *Son* can be understood according to your Notion of Person, without the *Fathers* and *Holy Ghosts* Incarnation also, I confess I cannot apprehend. Your Notion of a *Person* contradistinct to the *Scholastick*

lastick Notion, as was said before, seems to leave the Godhead to be but *one hypostasis*, or *Person* in the *latter sense*. How then are we to conceive of the *hypostatical union*? The *assumed Nature* will be as much *hypostatically united* with the *Father*, or the *Spirit*, as with the *Son*.

3. And doth not this *civil*, or meerly *respective* Notion of a *Person*, the other being left, fall in with the *Antitrinitarian*? Will it not make us *Unitarians* only, as they affect to call themselves? Would any of them who (as you are pleas'd to take notice *Letter 6. p. 1, 2.*) say, none but a *Mad-man* would deny there may be three *Persons* in *God*, have been so mad (not yet professing themselves *Converts*) as to say so, if they had not suppos'd their Cause not hurt by this *Notion of a Person*? For, (as you well say, *Letter 1.*) we need not be fond of words, so the thing be agreed, so have they equal reason to say, we need not be afraid of words, if in the sense you agree with us.

And

And with *one sort of them* I only desire you to consider how great an appearance the asserting only of *three Persons*, in the *one sense*, quitting the other, will carry off an agreement?

And have they not all the advantage left them which they seek in arguing against the *satisfaction* made by our Saviour from the necessity of an *alterity*, that in the business of making satisfaction there must be *alter* atque *alter*, One who satisfies, and another who is satisfy'd. I do very well know, what Instances are brought of *humane Rulers* making satisfaction for Delinquents, but there is no parity in the Cases. *They* being themselves Debtors to the governed Community, as God is not, who hath with most undoubted righteousness made all things for himself.

4. And consider whether by your Notion of a Person you forsake not the generality of them, who have gone, as to this point, under the repute of
Ortho-

Orthodox? Who no doubt have understood by *three Persons*, three *intelligent Hypostases*; tho' they have differ'd in thinking, *some of them*, that only a *πρόπλον ὑποστάσεων* was the *genitum* or *spiratum* as to the two latter; (a notion that is either too fine, or too little solid, for some Minds to grasp, or take any hold of.) Others that the divine Nature might it self be some way said to be communicated to them. But I pass to the

II^d Enquiry: Whether some further distinction may not be admitted *as possible*?

The only thing that straitens us here, is the most unquestionable *unity* or *unicity* (as we may call it) of the *Godhead*. Which, if it cannot be otherwise defended, I must yet for my part, notwithstanding these hardships (and I know no man with whom I could do it with more inclination) fall in with you. But I must crave it of you so far to fall in with you *know not who,*

who, as to apply your clearer mind, as, I do my more cloudy one, to consider whether it can or no?

You will here say *further than what?* and *what would I have further?*

To the *former* of these, I only say, further than the asserting, in very deed, but one *Hypostasis* in the Godhead, distinguished no otherwise into three, than by certain *relative capacities*, like those which may among men be sustain'd by one and the same man; and which distinction, as you after add, is *analogous* to what, in created beings, is called *distinctio modalis*.

To the *latter*, I desire you to observe what I generally propose, not that we may *positively* assert any further *determinate* distinction as *certain* and *known*; but only whether we may not admit some further distinction to be possible, in consistency with the *Unity of the Godhead*. I do equally detest and dread to speak with rash and peremptory confidence about things both so

Mysteri-

Myſterious and ſo Sacred. But may we not modeſtly ſay, that if to that *Oeconomy* which God hath repreſented himſelf in his Word, to bear, and keep afoot, towards his Creatures, any further diſtinction than hath been aſſigned is *neceſſary*, it is alſo *poſſible*, and may be, for ought we know (if indeed we know nothing to the contrary.) What is *impoſſible* we are ſure cannot be *neceſſary*. But God himſelf beſt, and only knows his own nature, and what his own meaning is in the representation he hath made to us. If we ſincerely aim to underſtand his meaning, that we may bear our ſelves towards him accordingly, he will vwith mercifull indulgence conſider our ſhort- or miſ-apprehenſions. But vve need not ſay *there is not* this or that diſtinction, if really vve do not know there is not. While vve know ſo little of natures inferiour to our ovvn, and even of our ovvn nature, and how things are diſtinguiſhed that belong to our ſelves

selves, vve have little reason to be shy of confessing ignorance about the Nature of God.

Therefore I most intirely agree to the tyvo Conclusions of the Ingenious *W. J.* vvherevvith he concludes his Letter. But in the mean time (and pursuantly enough thereto) cannot but doubt the concludingness of his very acute reasonings against, at least, some of the expressions of that learned Person (*Dr. Sherl.*) vvhich he animadverts upon, as, I perceive you also do *p. 16.* of your 7th Letter. And even *W. J.* himself: for vvith a pious modesty he tells us — concerning infinite Natures he presumes not to determine. *Letter, p. 8.*

What he objects against that Authors having said the *divine Persons* are *three beings really distinct* (vvherein I instance, not intending to run thorough that elaborate Letter) that then there must be three distinct Essences — seems to me
 2 παρρησιον. I doubt not the *Author* vvill easily

the Trinity in the Godhead. III

easily admit it. But what will be the consequence? That therefore there are three Deities? That cannot be *his meaning*, nor be consequent from it, if he only mean that the *Deity* comprehends in it *three such essences*. If indeed he think those *three beings* are as distinct as *Peter, James, and John*; what is said by *W. J.* against him, I think irrefragable, that then they are no otherwise one, than *Peter, James and John*; and by him against himself; for *Peter, James and John* are not mutually *self-conscious*, as *they* are asserted to be, which mutual self-consciousness, since it is supposed to make the three divine Persons one, cannot be supposed to leave them so distinct, as they are with whom it is not found.

As to what is observed of the defective expression of this unitive Principle by the word *consciousness*, that bare *Consciousness*, without consent, is no more than bare *Omniscience*. Sure it is not so much. For *Consciousness* doth not signify *Omniscience*.

sciency. We are conscious to our selves, yet are not omniscient. But I reckon, (as I find he also doth) that even *consent* added to *consciousness*, would yet leave the expression defective, and still want the *unifying power* which is sought after. For it would infer no more than a sort of *moral union*, which in the kind of it, may be found among men, between whom there is so little of *natural union* (speaking of the numerical nature) that they are actually separate.

But now may we not suppose (as that which is *possible*, and actually is, (for ought we know) what may be fundamental to both *Consciousness* and *Consent*, a *natural union* even of the numerical natures? Such an union would not infer an *Unity*, or *Identity* of these Natures, Essences, Substances, or Beings themselves. For as *W. J.* hath well argued, Letter, p. 5, 6. *Substances upon Union are not confounded or identify'd, or brought to unity of Substance, but*

con-

the Trinity in the Godhead. 113

continuing numerically distinct Substances acquire some mutual community or communication of operations, &c. And deferring the consideration a while what this would signifie towards the unity, notwithstanding, of the Godhead, shall take notice how accommodately to our present purpose W. J. speaks in what follows, where instancing in the chief unions that are known to us, he says, Our Soul and Body are two substances really distinct, and in close union with one another. But notwithstanding this, they continue distinct substances under that union. In like manner the humane soul of Christ is in union with the Logos, or second Person of the Trinity, which we call an hypostatical Union. But neither doth this union make an unity of substance. For the two substances of the divine and humane natures continue distinct under that union. 'Tis true, he addes, which must not be allowed in the Unity of the Godhead, where there can be no plurality or multiplicity of substances. Nor do I say that it must, I only say

Do we know, or are we sure there is no sort of Plurality?

But if we are sure that there are temporal unions (*i. e.* begun in time) as in our selves for instance, of two substances that make but one man, and in our Saviour an humane nature and divine that make but one *Emmanuel*. How do we know but that there may be *three* in the Godhead that make but *one God*? And the rather, because this being supposed, it must also be supposed that they are *necessarily and eternally united*, and with a conjunct natural impossibility of ever being, or having been otherwise, whereof the absolute immutability of God must upon that supposition most certainly assure us. And such a supposed union will be most remote from making the Deity an aggregate. And for any thing of composition, I reckon we are most strictly bound to believe every thing of the most perfect simplicity of the Divine Being which his Word informs us of,

the Trinity in the Godhead. 115

of, and to assent to every thing that is with plain evidence demonstrable of it. But not every thing which the Schools would impose upon us, without such testimony or evidence. For as none can know the things of a Man, but the Spirit of Man which is in him, so nor can any know the things of God, but the Spirit of God. Nor can I think the Argument concluding from the imperfection of a Being, in which distinct things concur that were separate, or are *de novo* united, to the imperfection of a being, in which things some-way distinct are necessarily and eternally self-united. Nor can therefore agree with *W. J.* that we are to look (universally) upon *real distinction* as a mark of separability; or that clear and distinct conception is to us the rule of partibility. For tho' I will not affirm that to be the state of all created Spirits; yet I cannot deny it to be possible that God might have created such a being, as should have in it distinct (assignable) parts, all of them essential to it, and

not separable from it without the cessation of the whole. But now, as the accession of the *humane Nature* to the *divine* in the *hypostatical union* infers no imperfection to the *divine*, so much less would what things we may suppose naturally, necessarily, and eternally united in the Godhead infer any *imperfection therein*.

I easily admit what is said by *W. 7.* Letter *pag. 8.* That we have no better definition of God, than that he is [a Spirit infinitely perfect] But then, being so far taught by himself my conception of him, I must include in it, this trinal distinction, or a *triple somewhat* which he affirms of himself, and without which, or any one whereof, he were not infinitely perfect, and consequently not God, and *that all together do make one God.* As you most aptly say of your resemblance of him, a *Cube*, there are in it three dimensions truly distinct from each other, yet all these are but *one Cube*, and if any one of the
three

three were wanting, it were not a Cube.

Set this down then for the Notion of God, that he is a Spirit infinitely perfect, comprehending in that omnimodous Perfection a *trinal distinction*, or *three persons truly distinct*, each whereof is God. What will be the consequence? that therefore there are *three Gods*? Not at all, but that each of these partaking Divine Nature give us an *inadequate*, and all together a most perfectly *adequate* and entire Notion of God.

Nor would the Language of this Hypothesis being prest to speak out (as he says in his Letter) be this—these are not *fit* to be called three Gods; but not *possible* (with any truth) to be so called.

And whereas he after tells us these *three* being united by similitude of Nature, mutual consciousness, consent, co-operation under the greatest union possible; and in that state of union do constitute the *τὸ θεῖον*, the entire all-com-

prehensive Godhead, and adds, this looks somewhat like a conceivable thing. To this I Note two things : 1. That he makes it not look like so conceivable a thing, as it really may do. For he leaves out the most important thing that was as supposable as any of the rest, and *prior* to a *meer* *similitude*, viz. a *natural union* of these (supposed) distinct essences, without which they are not under the greatest union possible; and which, being supposed necessary, and eternal, cannot admit these should be more than one God.

2. I note that what he opposes to it (so defectively represented) is as defective, that the Christian Trinity doth not use to be represented thus, &c. What hurt is there in it, if it can be more intelligibly represented than hath been used?

But his gentle treatment of *this hypothesis*, which he thought, as he represents it, not altogether unintelligible, and

the Trinity in the Godhead. 119

and which with some help may be more intelligible, became one enquiring what might most safely, and with least torture to our own minds, be said, or thought in so awful a Mystery. It however seems not proper to call this an *hypostatical union* — much less to say it amounts to no more. It amounts not to so much. For an *hypostatical* or *personal union* would make the *terms united* (the *unita*, the things or somewhats under this union) become by it *one hypostasis* or *person*; whereas *this union* must leave them distinct *persons* or *hypostases*, but makes them *one God*. In the use of the Phrase *hypostatical* or *personal union* the denomination is not taken from the *subject* of the union, as if the design were to signify *that* to be *divers hypostases*, or *persons*, but from the *effect* or *result* of the *mentioned union*, to signify that which results to be *one person* or *hypostasis*. As the matter is plain in the instance wherein it is of most noted use, the case of the *two Natures* united

ted in the one Person of the Son of God; where the things united are not supposed to be *two Persons*, but *two Natures* so conjoyn'd, as yet to make but *one person*, which therefore is the Negative result or effect of the union, viz. that the person is not multiply'd by the accession of another Nature, but remains still only one. But this were an union quite of another kind, viz. of the *three hypostases*, still remaining distinct, and concurring in one Godhead. And may not this be supposed without prejudice to its Perfection.

For the *Schools* themselves suppose themselves not to admit a composition prejudicial to the Perfection of the Godhead, when they admit three modes of subsistence, which are distinct from one another, and from the Godhead, which they must admit. For if each of them were the very Godhead, each of them (as is urged against us by you know who) must have three Persons belonging to it, as the Godhead hath. And your

your self acknowledge *three somewhats* in the Godhead distinct, or else they could not be *three* : I will not here urge that if they be three somewhats, they must be *three things*, not three nothings; for however uneasy it is to assign a *Medium* between something and nothing, I shall wave that Metaphysical contest. But yet collect, that *simplicity* in the very strictest sense that can be conceiv'd, is not, in your account, to be ascribed to God, either according to his own word, or the reason of things.

It may here be urged, how can we conceive this *Natural Union* (as I have adventur'd to Phrase it) of the *three Persons*, supposing them *distinct things, substances, or Spirits* ? Is such an *Union* conceivable, as shall make them be *but one God*, and not be such, as shall make them cease to be three distinct things, substances, or Spirits ? We find indeed the mentioned unions of *Soul and Body* in our selves, and of the *two Natures* in Christ consistent enough with manifest distincti-

distinction; but then the things united are in themselves of most different Natures. But if things of so congenerous a Nature be united, will not their distinction be lost in their union?

I answer, 1. That a Spirit and a Spirit are numerically as distinct, as a Body and a Spirit. And, 2. That we may certainly conceive it as possible to God to have united two or three created Spirits, and by as strict union as is between our Souls and Bodies, without confounding them; and I reckon the union between our Souls and Bodies much more wonderful than that would have been. Why then is an unmade, uncreated union of three Spirits less conceivable as that which is to be presupposed to their mutual consciousness?

I shall not move, or meddle with, any Controversie about the Infinity of these three supposed Substances or Spirits, it being acknowledged on all hands that Contemplations of that kind cannot but be above our measure. And
-inallib
well

well knowing how much easier it is to puzzle *oneself* upon that *Question*, *An possit dari infinitum infinito infinitius*, than to speak satisfyingly, and unexceptionably about it to another.

And tho' I will not use the expressions, as signifying my formed judgment, that there are *three things, substances, or Spirits* in the Godhead (as you that there are *three somewhats*) yet, as I have many Years thought, I do still think that what the learned *W. J.* doth but more lightly touch of the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* being produced (which term I use, but reciting it, as he doth) not by a voluntary external, but by an internal, necessary, and emanative Act, hath great weight in it.

In short my sense hath long lain thus, and I submit it to your searching and candid Judgment, viz. That tho' we need not have determinate thoughts, *how far* the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* are distinguished; yet we must conceive them *in the general* to be *so far distinguished*,

guished, as is really necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which the Scriptures do distinctly give them. And that whatever distinction is truly necessary to that purpose, will yet not hinder the two *latters* participation with the *first* in the *Godhead*, which can be but one, because that tho' we are led by plain Scripture, and the very import of that word, to conceive of the *Father* as the Fountain, yet the *Son* being from him, and the *Holy Ghost* from them both, not contingently, or dependently on will and pleasure; but by eternal, natural, necessary promanation, these two latter are infinitely distinguished from the whole Creation. Inasmuch as all Creatures are contingent beings, or dependent upon will and pleasure, as the Character is given us of created things, Rev. 4. 11. *Thou hast made all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* But that whatever is what it is necessarily is God. For I have no doubt but the Dreams of some, more anciently, and

of

of late, concerning *necessary matter*, and the *Sophisms* of *Spinoza* and some others, tending to prove the *necessity* and *identity* of all *substance* are (with what they aim to evince) demonstrably false.

The Summe of all will be this,

1. That we can be more certain of nothing than that there is but one God.

2. We are most sure the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* are sufficiently distinguished to give a just ground to the distinct attributions, which are in Scripture severally given to them.

3. We are not sure what that sufficient distinction is (wherein I find you saying with me over and over) But whereas you rightly make the word *person* applicable to God, but in a sense analogous to that which obtains of it with men; why may it not be said it may be fitly applicable, *for ought we know*, in a sense analogous to that notion of it among men, which makes a *person* signify an intelligent hypostasis, and so three distinct persons, three distinct intelligent hypostases.

4. But

4. But if that *sufficient distinction* can be no less, than that there be in the Godhead, three distinct intelligent hypostases, each having its own distinct singular intelligent nature, with its proper personality belonging to it, we know nothing to the contrary, but that the necessary eternal nature of the Godhead may admit thereof. If any can from plain Scripture testimony, or cogent reason evince the contrary, let the evidence be produced. In the mean time we need not impose upon our selves any formal denial of it.

5. If the contrary can be evidenced, and that hereupon it be designed to conclude that there can be but one intelligent hypostasis in the Godhead, and therefore that the Son, and the Holy Ghost are but creatures, the last refuge must be to deny the former consequence, and to alledge that tho' the same finite singular nature cannot well be understood to remain entirely to one, and be communicated entirely to another, and

and another, the case will not be the same speaking of an infinite Nature.

SIR,

If what is here said shall occasion to you any new thoughts that you shall judge may be of common use, I conceive there will be no need of Publishing my Letter, but only that you be pleased to communicate your own Sentiments, as from your self, which will have so much the more of Authority and Usefulness with them. The most considerable thing that I have hinted, is the necessary Promanation of the Son, and Holy Ghost, that must distinguish them from contingent Beings, and so from Creatures; which if you think improveable to any good purpose, as it hath been with me a Thought *many years old*, so I suppose it *not new* to you, and being now resumed by you, upon this occasion, you will easily cultivate it to better advantage than any words of mine can give it.

But if you think it adviseable that any

I

part

part of my Letter be Published, if you please to signify your mind to that purpose in one Line to _____ marked _____ it will come Sealed to my view, and will give Opportunity of offering my Thoughts to you, what parts I would have suppress, which will be such only, as shall leave the rest the fuller Testimony of my being,

S I R,

*Your most sincere Honourer and most
respectful Humble Servant,*

Anonym.

Poirets method of proving a Trinity in the Godhead, tho' it call it self Mathematical or Geometrical, is with me much less convictive, than the plain Scriptural way.

LETTER II.

S I R,

YOur Eighth Letter happening to come to my View before it was printed

printed off, I have the Opportunity of taking Notice to you that it quite misrepresents the intent of the Letter to you subscribed *Anonymous*, which it makes to be the defending or excusing some Expressions of Dr. *Sherlock's*; which indeed was the least considerable thing, if it were any thing at all in the design of that Letter, and not altogether accidental to it. The true design of it was, that there might be a clearer Foundation asserted (as possible at least) to the Doctrine of the Incarnation and Satisfaction of the Son of God. Nor can the *forte quod sic*, here be solved by the *forte quod non*, the Exigency of the Case being such, as that *if more be possible*, it will be *highly requisite*; and that it cannot well be avoided to assert more, unless it can be clearly evinced that more is *impossible*. Nor yet is it necessary to determine how much more is necessary. But not only the commonly receiv'd frame of *Christian Doctrine*, doth seem to require somewhat beyond what the meer

civil or *respective* Notion of the word *Person* imports ; but also the plain Letter of Scripture, which says *Heb. 1. 3.* that the Son is the express Image of the Father *hypostasis*, which seems to signify there are *two Hyypostases*, and other Scriptures seem to say enough, whence we may with parity of Reason collect a *third*. Now that Letter intimates, I think, sufficient matter of doubt, whether *hypostasis* doth not signify much more than *Person*, in your sense.

The principal thing that Letter humbly offer'd to consideration [*i. e.* whether, supposing a greater distinction than you have assign'd be *necessary*, it may not be defended, by the just supposal that the *promanation* of the second or third Persons (or *hypostases* rather) howsoever divers they are, is by *natural eternal necessity*, not *contingent*, or *depending upon will and pleasure*, as all created Being is and doth] is altogether waved. That Letter was written with design of giving you the occasion of considering what
might

might be further *requisite* and *possible* to be asserted for the *serving* of the Truth, and with that *sincerity* and *plenitude* of *respect* to you that it might be wholly in your own Power to do it in such a way, as wherein not at all to *disserve* your self. Which Temper of Mind is still the same with

Decemb. 91.

Reverend SIR,

*Your most unfeigned Honourer,
and Humble Servant,*

Anonym.

LETTER III.

Worthy SIR,

I Am very loath troublesomely to importune you. But the very little time I had for the view of your 8th. Letter, before I wrote mine by the *last Post* not allowing me fully to write my sense as to *that part* which concern'd *my former Letter*; I take leave now to add,
I 3 that

that my design in it (as well as the profess design of the Letter it self) was to offer you the occasion of employing that clear understanding, wherewith God hath blest you, above most, in considering whether a *greater latitude* cannot be allow'd us in conceiving the *distinction* of the three in the *Godhead* consistently with the *Unity* thereof, than your *notion* of a *person* will extend to. And if it can, whether it ought not to be represented (at least as possible) to give a less exceptionable ground to the Doctrines of the *incarnation* and *satisfaction* of the *second Person*, in order whereto it seems to me highly requisite. This was that I really intended, and not the vindicating the Sentiments of *that Author*, which you might observe that letter animadverts upon. The Scripture seems to allow a greater latitude, by the ground it gives us to apprehend *three hypostases*; which so much differ from the notion you give of *persons*, that one *hypostasis* may sustain three such *persons* as you describe. The
only

only thing that seems to straiten us in this matter, is the usual Doctrine of the Schools about the *divine simplicity*. I confess I greatly coveted to have had your thoughts engag'd in sifting and examining that Doctrine; so far as to consider whether there be really any thing in it, cogent and demonstrable that will be repugnant to what is overtur'd in that Letter. And I the rather desir'd more room might be gained in this matter, apprehending the *Unitarians* (as they more lately affect to call themselves) might, upon the whole, think you more *theirs*, than *ours*; and while they agree with you concerning the possibility of such a Trinity as you assert, may judge their advantage against the other mentioned Doctrines, no less than it was.

My desiring that letter of mine might not be printed, was most agreeable to what I intended in writing it; that was, only to suggest to you somewhat (very loosely) that I reckon'd you more capable than any man I knew, to cultivate, and im-

prove, to the great service of the *common Christian Cause*. And that you might seem to say, what you might, upon your own search, find safe and fit to be said, *as meerly from your self*, without taking notice that occasion was given you by *any such Letter at all*. Had I design'd it for publick view, it should have been writ with more Care, and with more (expressed) Respect to you. But if upon the whole, you judge there is nothing in it considerable to the purposes it mentions, my further request is, you will please rather to suppress that part of your Letter which concerns it (for which I suppose there is yet opportunity) and take no notice any such letter came to your hands. I am,

Decemb. 19. 91.

Reverend SIR,

Your most Respectful,

Humble Servant,

Anonym.

Sum-

Summary Propositions, collected out of the foregoing Discourses, more briefly offering to view the substance of what is contained in them.

1. *Of the Unity of the Godhead there can be no doubt, it being in reason demonstrable, and most expressly, often, asserted in Scripture.*
2. *That there is a Trinity in the Godhead, of Father, Son, or Word, and Holy Ghost is the plain, obvious sense of so many Scriptures, that it apparently tends*
to

to frustrate the design of the whole Scripture-revelation, and to make it useless, not to admit this Trinity, or otherwise to understand such Scriptures.

3. That therefore the devising any other sense of such Scriptures ought by no means to be attempted, unless this Trinity in the Godhead can be evidently demonstrated to be impossible.
4. That the impossibility of it can never be demonstrated from the meer Unity of the Godhead, which may be such, as to admit these distinctions in it, for ought we know.
5. Nothing is more appropriate to the Godhead than to be a necessarily existent, intelligent Being; since all Creatures whether intelligent, or unintelligent, are contingent, depending upon the Will of the necessary, intelligent, Being.
6. If therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do coexist in the Godhead necessarily, they cannot but be God.

7. And

7. And if the first be conceived as the Fountain, the second as by natural necessary (not voluntary) promanation from the first, the third by natural, necessary (not voluntary) spiration, so as that neither of these latter, could have been otherwise; This aptly agrees with the Notions of Father, Son, and Spirit distinctly put upon them, and infinitely distinguishes the two latter from all Creatures that depend upon will and pleasure.
8. Whatever distinction there be of these three among themselves, yet the first being the Original, the second being by that promanation necessarily and eternally united with the first, the third by such spiration united necessarily and eternally with both the other, inasmuch as eternity, and necessity of existence admit no change, this union must be inviolable, and everlasting, and thereupon the Godhead which they constitute, can be but One.
9. We have among the creatures, and even in our selves, instances of very different

Na-

Natures, continuing distinct, but so united, as to be one thing; and it were more easily supposable of congenerous Natures.

10. If such Union with distinction be impossible in the Godhead, it must not be from any repugnancy in the thing it self, since very intimate Union, with continuing distinction, is in it self no impossible thing; but from somewhat peculiar to the Divine Being.
11. That peculiarity, since it cannot be Unity (which because it may admit distinctions in one and the same thing, we are not sure it cannot be so in the Godhead) must be that simplicity commonly wont to be ascribed to the divine Nature.
12. Such simplicity as shall exclude that distinction, which shall appear necessary in the present case, is not by express Scripture any where ascribed to God; and therefore must be rationally demonstrated

ted of him, if it shall be judg'd to belong at all to him.

13. Absolute Simplicity is not a Perfection, nor is by any ascribed to God. Not by the Socinians themselves, who ascribe to him the several intellectual and moral excellencies, that are attributed to him in the Scriptures, of which they give very different definitions, as may be seen in their own Volkeli^{us} at large, which should signifie them not to be counted, in all respects, the same thing.
14. That is not a just consequence, which is the most plausible one that seems capable of being alledg'd for such absolute simplicity, that otherwise there would be a composition admitted in the Divine Nature, which would import an imperfection inconsistent with Deity. For the several excellencies that concur in it, howsoever distinguished, being never put together, nor having ever existed apart, but in eternal, necessary union, tho' they may make some sort of variety, import

port no proper composition, and carry with them more apparent Perfection than absolute omnimodous simplicity can be conceived to do.

15. Such a supposed possible variety even of individual Natures in the Deity, some way differing from each other, infers not an unbounded Liberty of conceiving what pluralities therein we please or can imagine. The divine revelation, which could only justify, doth also limit us, herein, mentioning three distinct I's or He's, and no more.

16. The several Attributes which are common to these three, do to our apprehension, and way of conceiving things, require less distinction; no more, for ought we know, than may arise from their being variously modify'd, according to the distinction of Objects, or other extrinsecal things, to which they may be referr'd.

We that so little know how our own Souls, and the Powers and Principles that belong to them do differ from one another, and from them, must be supposed more ignorant, and should be less curious, in this.

F I N I S.

Books printed for, and sold by Tho. Parkhurst at the Bible and Three Crowns at the lower end of Cheap-side, near Mercers Chappel.

A Body of *practical divinity*, consisting of above 176 Sermons on the *Lesser Catechisme* compos'd by the Reverend *Assembly of Divines at Westminster*: With a Supplement of some Sermons on several Texts of Scripture. By *Thomas Watson*, formerly Minister of *St. Stephens Walbrook, London*.

Theological Discourses, in two Volumes:
The First, Containing eight Letters and three Sermons

Books sold by Tho. Parkhurst.

Sermons concerning the *Blessed Trinity*: The Second, containing 13 Sermons on several Occasions. By *John Wallis*, D. D. Professor of Geometry in *Oxon*.

An Account of the *Blessed Trinity*, argued from the nature and perfection of the Supreme Spirit, coincident with the Scripture Doctrine in all the Articles of the Catholick Creeds, together with its Mystical, Federal, Practical uses, in the Christian Religion. By *William Burrough*, Rector of *Cheynis* in *Bucks*.

The confirming Work of Religion, or its great things made Plain by their primary Evidences and Demonstrations, whereby the meanest in the Church may soon be made able to render an account of their Faith. By *R. Fleming*, Author of the *Fulfilling of the Scriptures*. Now Published by *Daniel Burges*.

The Rod or the Sword, the present Dilemma of the Nations of *England*, *Scotland* and *Ireland*, considered, argued and improved, &c.

A *Family Altar* erected to the Honour of the Eternal God; or a Solemn Essay to promote the Worship of God in private Houses, together with the best Entail, or dying Parents living Hopes for their surviving Children, grounded upon the Covenant of Gods Grace with Believers and their Seed. By *Oliver Heywood*, Minister of the Gospel.